

## **JEWISH IDENTITY OF JEWISH DISCIPLES OF YESHUA**

### **Four different fundamental perspectives**

There is an important discussion among Jewish (Israeli) disciples of Yeshua on their Jewish identity. They seek to express - or at least to understand - their Jewish identity while serving Yeshua the Messiah. There are four different fundamental perspectives, as follows:

- 1) Primary emphasis on the principle that “There is no difference between Jew and Gentile in the Messiah Yeshua.”
- 2) Maintenance of Jewish identity through Torah observance, which remains obligatory according to the teachings of Yeshua.
- 3) Maintenance of Jewish identity through adoption of the rabbinic tradition of the people of Israel.
- 4) Independent application of Jewish traditions, according to the leading of the Spirit of God.

You can read about this in *Zot Habrit*, September 2007 English Issue No. 6, Part One. (page 7 - 25) at [http://www.mjai.co.il/UserFiles/File/Zot%20habrit%206%20en\(1\).pdf](http://www.mjai.co.il/UserFiles/File/Zot%20habrit%206%20en(1).pdf)

*CONTENT:*

### **PART ONE: Our Identity**

#### **The Seminar's Inception**

Boaz Fastman ..... 7

#### **Messianism Equals Judaism**

Eitan Kashtan ..... 9

#### **The Torah is Obligatory in Light of the Words of Yeshua / Gershon Nerel ..... 12**

#### **First Century Jewish Identity as a Model**

Joseph Shulam ..... 15

#### **From Mount Sinai to the Upper Room**

Eitan Shishkoff ..... 19

#### **Questions and Answers ..... 21**

**Comments and Responses ..... 22-25.**

This is a journal of *The Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel*, P.O. Box 40192, Mevasseret Zion 90805, Tel.: 972-2-579-1087 Fax: 972-2-534-9052.  
Internet site: [www.mjai.co.il](http://www.mjai.co.il).

You can also find a copy of page 7 - 25 below.

---

More on this subject: 0272uk and 0273uk on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl)

And on [www.tjci.org](http://www.tjci.org)

This is document 0271uk on [www.stucom.nl](http://www.stucom.nl)

# Zot Habrit This is the Covenant

A Journal of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel (MJAI)



September 2007

English Issue No. 6

## A Word from the Editors:

The current issue of *This is the Covenant* is an enlarged English adaptation of the proceedings of two seminars which were carried out in Hebrew at the Messianic village of Yad Hashmona in the Judean Hills near Jerusalem. Both seminars were initiated and organized by the executive committee of the MJAI. The first seminar focused on the topic of "Our Jewish Identity in the Messiah Yeshua," and took place on Friday, January 26, 2001, during the bi-annual general meeting of the MJAI. The second seminar, on "The Trinity – What do we believe?," took place on Friday, February 7, 2003.

Although these materials appear in writing only now, they are still most relevant also several years later, and thus they remain "ever green." It is our hope and prayer that the two last seminars of MJAI, on Christian anti-Semitism and on Politics among Israeli Yeshua-believers, will appear within the next year.



Gershon Nerel and Hanan Lukatz

## PART ONE: Our Identity

### The Seminar's Inception

Boaz Fastman ..... 7

### Messianism Equals Judaism

Eitan Kashtan ..... 9

### The Torah is Obligatory in Light of the Words of Yeshua / Gershon Nerel

..... 12

### First Century Jewish Identity as a Model

Joseph Shulam ..... 15

### From Mount Sinai to the Upper Room

Eitan Shishkoff ..... 19

Questions and Answers ..... 21

Comments and Responses ..... 22

## PART TWO: The Trinity

### The Trinity – An Historical Perspective

Gershon Nerel ..... 29

### The Corporeal Revelation of God in the Hebrew Scriptures / Asher Intrater

..... 36

### The Nature of the Messiah

Baruch Maoz ..... 40

### Who is the Holy Spirit?

Victor Smadja ..... 46

### The Relationship of the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father / T.F.

..... 48

### The "Holy Trinity" through the Looking-Glass of Judaism / Joseph Shulam

..... 51

Discussion ..... 57



# ZOT HABRIT - THIS IS THE COVENANT

## זאת הברית



Published by The Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel (MJAI)

Founder: Menahem Benhayim (1924-2004)

### **MJAI Executive Committee**

Hanan Lukatz \* Gershon Nerel \* Arthur Goldberg \* Asher Intrater  
Brile Balay \* Zvi Randelman \* Danny Sayag  
Recording Secretary: Mina Blau

Editorial coordinator: Sara Nerel  
Design & Graphics: Ishai Nerel  
Translation into English: Keri Warshawski  
Proofreading: Annie Nissim

The writings in ZOT HABRIT contain the opinions of the respective authors, and do not necessarily represent the opinion of the publisher

ZOT HABRIT is distributed gratis.

Contributions are welcome and should be designated for HADADIT

Information about the authors of these articles can be received from the office

ISSN: 1565-8821



# PART ONE

**This issue is an English adaptation of the proceedings of a seminar on the topic:**

## **“Our Jewish Identity in the Messiah Yeshua”**

**Which was held in Hebrew at Moshav Yad Hashmona on January 26, 2001  
during the Annual Meeting of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel**

---

The original version of the seminar proceedings was  
published in the Hebrew edition of  
ZOT HABRIT (This is the Covenant)  
vol. 16, April 2001



## The Seminar's Inception

### Boaz Fastman

Approximately six months ago, Menahem Benhayim<sup>1</sup> approached me and expressed his opinion that one of the goals of the Alliance should be the stimulation of lively discussion on topics which are unique to Jewish believers in Yeshua the Messiah, particularly topics with which Jewish Israeli disciples of Yeshua wrestle as they seek to suitably express their Jewish identity while serving Yeshua the Messiah.

With these thoughts in mind, we decided to integrate a seminar and open discussion on the topic, "Our Jewish Identity in the Messiah Yeshua," into the upcoming annual meeting of the Alliance. The executive committee of the Alliance attempted to outline the predominant perspectives existing in the Land regarding our Jewish identity in the Messiah Yeshua. In other words, they set out to determine the different views in the Land concerning the ways in which a Messianic Jew ought to express his Jewish identity while following Yeshua the Messiah. Expression of Jewish identity is a central issue for Jewish Israeli believers, and it is clear to all that existing opinions on this seminar topic are numerous, divergent and at times even polarized. After discussion, we came to the conclusion that there are four different fundamental perspectives, as follows:

- 1) Primary emphasis on the principle that "There is no difference between Jew and Gentile in the Messiah Yeshua."
- 2) Maintenance of Jewish identity through Torah observance, which remains obligatory according to the teachings of Yeshua.
- 3) Maintenance of Jewish identity through adoption of the rabbinic tradition of the people of Israel.
- 4) Independent application of Jewish traditions, according to the leading of the Spirit of God.

The next stage involved turning to fellow believers who represented each

---

1) Menahem Benhayim went to be with the Lord on July 4th, 2004. See Gershon Nerel, "Menahem Benhayim (1924-2004) – In Memoriam," *Zot Habrit*, vol. 20, October 2004, pp. 1-3 (Hebrew).

perspective, and receiving their consent to present their perspective on the subject. The leaders who agreed to speak, according to the order of perspectives mentioned above, are: Eitan Kashtan, Gershon Nerel, Joseph Shulam and Eitan Shishkoff. We emphasized the need for presentations that would encourage willingness to listen to one another and stimulate serious, mutually respectful discussion.

## The Seminar

Some 80 people attended the seminar, held at Moshav Yad Hashmona, from differing backgrounds and different congregations across the country. Hanan Lukatz, chairman of the Alliance, encouraged those present to respectfully address the speakers and maintain a good-natured discussion. The seminar itself was divided into three parts: the first, consecutive twenty-minute presentations by the speakers on each of the four perspectives; the second, audience questions and comments directed to the speakers; and lastly, time for the speakers' responses and open discussion.

The seminar was very interesting and was held in a respectful manner, which testifies to the increasing maturity of the believers in the Land in their

ability to listen and respectfully treat fellow believers who hold different and even polarized views on the same subject. The impression at the end of the seminar was that the various perspectives generally complemented one another, placing emphases on different aspects of the Scriptures and faith in Yeshua the Messiah. The seminar lasted approximately two and one half hours, and was recorded in its entirety. We have provided a summary of the speakers' presentations below (as they were presented to us in writing), and the discussion held thereafter.

It is our hope that the content of the materials presented in this issue will help us to further crystallize our understanding and perspective regarding the expression of our Jewish identity in the Messiah Yeshua.



## Messianism Equals Judaism

### Eitan Kashtan

Jewish identity in the Messiah. So many words are spoken and written on this subject. It is strange that the first Messianics debated the totally opposite question: “What is the identity of the Gentile in the Messiah?”

Not a single one of the first believers thought for even a moment that his Messianism cancelled his Judaism.<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, they saw in Messianism as represented by Yeshua, and later by the apostles, the incarnation of Judaism. So what happened? How is it that we are drawn time and again to defend our Judaism? How has it happened that to those around us, and even, to my great sorrow, to us, it appears that we have adopted the faith of the Gentiles, within which we need to try to maintain our Judaism? If we were all confident in our Jewish identity, maybe we wouldn't continually busy ourselves saying, “We're Jews! We're Jews!” Brothers and sisters, in order to understand our Jewish identity it is worthwhile to define Judaism for ourselves. Is Judaism what the rabbis represent today? Is Judaism what the

rabbis represented during the Mishnaic period? Is Judaism the Torah of Moses alone? Is Judaism the Old Covenant alone? Does Judaism attribute greater authority to a particular section of the Holy Scriptures? Or is Judaism the true, pure faith in the God of Israel according to His Word as expressed in

Not a single one of the first believers thought for even a moment that his Messianism cancelled his Judaism

the Old and New Covenants? Judaism was almost never what the leaders of the people claimed it was. Those who adopted the ways of the priests, Hophni and Phinehas, rather than drawing near to Judaism, distanced themselves from it. Whoever offered sacrifices according to the Torah of Moses but whose heart was far from God was less “Jewish” than the one who loved God with all his heart. In the days of Jeremiah, while it was true that the people practiced the notable commandments of the Torah, yet God could scarcely find even one individual who actually “seeks truth” (Jeremiah 5:1). God determines that if He could find one such individual, He would forgive Jerusalem.

Isaiah lamented Israel fasting according to the laws of the Torah but not caring for the weak. The focus of Judaism was never ritual but rather the

1) Let the reader please keep in mind that traditionally there is no distinction in Hebrew between “Judaism”, “Jewishness”, and, at times, “Jewry”. These English concepts are expressed in the single Hebrew word ‘Yahadut’ which is translated “Judaism” in this section.

love of God and walking in the ways that He prescribed.

I am not making light of God's commandments, but the point is that true Judaism is total submission to His Word, and to His Word alone!

Accordingly, if God determined that Yeshua is the Messiah, then to believe in the Messiah is true Judaism! If our faith, that which we call Messianism, faithfully represents God's will and His Word, then our faith is Jewish. What I am saying here was so clear two thousand years ago. The question asked at that time dealt with the identity of the Gentiles that joined the Jews by serving God in the Messiah. How can a Gentile serve the God of Israel? Isaiah (ch. 46) already spoke of this when he said that any Gentile who believes in the God of Israel joins the people of Israel as an equal. Not whoever takes upon himself the tradition of Israel, not whoever undergoes a "halachic conversion," not whoever wears a yarmulke and says the *Shmoneh Esrei* prayer, but whoever loves the God of Israel and walks in His ways.

Therefore, the question is not Jewish identity in the Messiah, which is perfectly clear and is derived from the Holy Scriptures and from them alone. The question is how should a Messianic live, whether he be a Jew or a non-Jew. The question is not if we are obligated to keep the traditions of Israel, which of course we are not.

The question is not even if we are required to keep the commandments of the Torah, an issue which is more than sufficiently addressed in the New Covenant. Whoever thinks that we are obligated to keep the Torah, needs to essentially negate the authority of the Epistle to the Galatians, the Epistle to the Hebrews, extensive selections from the Epistle to the Romans, and more. The Holy Scriptures clearly state that Messianics, Jews and Gentiles alike, inherit the promise that God gave to Abraham. The Holy Scriptures clearly state that Messianics, Jews and Gentiles alike, are forgiven through the atonement of the Messiah when they repent. There is no difference between Jewish and Gentile believer in Jesus, and it is



forbidden for there to be a difference. The partition between Jews and Gentiles was removed at great expense by the blood of the Messiah and we are forbidden to rebuild it.

Still we must ask another question: Do we as Jews and as Israelis in any way express our past or our national heritage in the framework of our service of God? Of course we do, since we are who we are. Therefore we celebrate the New Year and Hanukkah, not as a religious obligation before God, but

as part of our national identification with the people of Israel, just as we celebrate Independence Day. I don't expect a Japanese believer to celebrate Hanukkah or to participate in a

In order to understand our Jewish identity it is worthwhile to define Judaism for ourselves

Passover seder. We do this because we are Jews living in Israel, not as a religious obligation. For this reason we should not judge one another, because we have freedom in the Messiah. Whoever wishes may celebrate the holidays of the Torah as he pleases, just as whosoever wishes may keep kosher. But we are forbidden to force our opinion on someone else. There is no scriptural basis to say that a Messianic Jew has certain obligations that differ from those of a non-Jewish Messianic, so we must be wary not to discriminate against the non-Jew. Perhaps one more point: many argue that we should behave as Jews in order to reach our people. Many say that visitors will feel at ease if our services include motifs that recall the synagogue. If so, the opposite position is correct. Many times religious organizations accuse us of misleading our audiences. We try to look and to sound like religious Jews and to call for faith in the Messiah.

Brothers and sisters, the news of the Messiah is good, and is not in need of adornment. Whoever hears the gospel needs to distinguish the difference, and this difference should be emphasized. True Judaism is not the prayer shawl and the yarmulke but rather the New Covenant in the blood of the Messiah, a covenant that unites all of the believers without partiality.

This uniting covenant, the New Covenant that Jeremiah describes, is a covenant made by God with Israel, who in His grace has afforded the Gentiles an opportunity to become partners. Thus those who were "far off," i.e. the Gentiles, have been "brought near by the blood of Messiah" and all have become "fellow citizens" (Ephesians 2). The Gentiles that have joined this covenant were grafted in against nature as Shaul (Paul) the apostle describes in his Epistle to the Romans (11:11-24). This is the greatness of the gospel, the greatness of Judaism, the greatness of Messianism.

If we were to use the proper terminology, we would say that the Jewish faith and the Messianic faith are one. Therefore, being a Messianic Jew is the most natural thing on earth, and one has no need to search out his identity, which is deeply embedded in his faith. As for the Gentiles, they may explore their national identity as those who have joined the Jewish faith.

## The Torah is Obligatory in Light of the Words of Yeshua

### Gershon Nerel

The theological and national identity of Jews who believe in Yeshua is not a theoretical question. In everyday life we are required to relate to this subject on a personal and familial level as well as in the framework of our congregations. Our starting point regarding our Jewish identity usually revolves around the keeping of the Torah. Our Lord Yeshua already said in the ‘Sermon on the Mount’: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or tittle will by no means pass from the Torah till all is fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17-18). In principle, the Torah of Moses and the Pentateuch are still valid and even binding upon us. On the other hand, we are not “legalists,” and do not see in the Torah “laws” which have the final say in spiritual matters. In matters of interpretation and spiritual direction, the highest and ultimate authority from our standpoint are the words of Yeshua the Messiah, the Son of God, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.



The central question is how are we to keep the Torah - according to the Orthodox Rabbinic Halacha, or the Reform-Conservative, or to actually pave a unique and independent path of our own? Set before us is the challenge to walk in an old-new way, the way of the Jewish followers of Yeshua of the first century in Israel, as described in the New Covenant. At the same time, we must also take into account the last two thousand years of history. We must explain the fact that in terms of atonement for sin and the salvation of souls, there is no difference between Jew and non-Jew. We must clarify, however, that there is indeed a distinct and legitimate Jewish identity for those that belong to the people of Israel.

Below are a number of practical examples of how we keep the Torah from our perspective, and thus express our Jewish identity:

1. We observe the law of circumcision (Genesis 17:10).
2. We observe the Sabbath and the holidays according to the biblical calendar (Leviticus 23).
3. We keep kosher according to the principle “You shall not boil a young goat in its mother’s milk” (Exodus 23:19, 34:26).
4. We do not “harm the edges” of our beards (Leviticus 19:27).

Of course there are many facets to this subject, however the ‘key’ for us is how to distinguish between the essence and the minutiae. The answer lies in the principle that the New Covenant is the key to understanding the Old Covenant, and the Old Covenant is the basis for understanding the New Covenant. In other words, Yeshua’s instruction is the key for keeping the Torah,

In matters of interpretation and spiritual direction, the highest and ultimate authority from our standpoint are the words of Yeshua the Messiah, the Son of God, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit

such as observation of the Sabbath - not on Sunday as in churches - and according to the principle that “it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:12), and “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). Accordingly, when the Lord Yeshua said: “You have heard it said to the ancients... but I say to you...” He was positioning

himself as a reformer of the Torah, and as One who, in contrast to the Torah of Moses, for example, unequivocally forbade divorce (Matthew 5:31-32). It is perfectly clear to us that Yeshua Himself is the One who gave the Torah at Mount Sinai, and He is also the One who has the authority to explain, reform and amend it.

As Jewish followers of Yeshua, we are not subject to the Oral Torah, and we do not need to keep the traditions and customs of the rabbis. For example:

1. We do not keep the rabbinic *halacha* regarding the separation of milk and meat.
2. We are not required to wear a yarmulke.
3. We do not have to light Sabbath and Hanukkah candles.
4. We do not need to celebrate Purim, and certainly not as carnivalesque and clowning in the congregation.

Nevertheless, since today to some degree the rabbis “sit in the seat of Moses” (Matthew 23:1), we are not prohibited from receiving “general services” from the rabbinic establishment, such as:

1. Professional *Mohels* (Ritual Circumcisers).
2. Rabbinic Marriage - if and when the rabbis are prepared to marry us.
3. *Hevrat Kaddisha* (Ritual Burial Services) - if and when the rabbis are prepared to bury our dead.

Our problem today concerns the worldview and definition of “Messianic Judaism,” which in actuality creates confusion and even internal contradictions, and not only from a semantic point-of-view. Chabadniks (Lubavitsch Hassidim), for example, along with other Messianists, like the followers of Rabbi Nahman from Ouman (Breslau), also speak of “Messianic Judaism.”

What is the definition of ‘Judaism’? It is a fact that secular Jewishness (and even secular Orthodoxy) exists, so there is actually a need to differentiate between Jewry and Judaism.

The problem that I see is that the “Messianic Judaism” of today, with its over-emphasis on the Law and tradition (for the most part, Eastern European tradition), takes center stage at the expense of the gospel of the Kingdom of God and the words of Yeshua. What I have

seen of today's "Messianic Judaism," with its confused "Messianic *Halacha*," reflects a situation of distorted proportions. It is our obligation to focus on the words of Yeshua himself. We are to remember well what Yeshua said regarding the rabbis and scribes, as follows:

Only in the State of Israel can we express our Jewish identity without need for Halacha and rabbinic tradition

"You shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13).

"You travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves" (Matthew 23:15).

"Blind guides, fools and hypocrites" (Matthew 23).

"Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered" (Luke 11:52).

Only in the State of Israel can we express our Jewish identity without need for *Halacha* and rabbinic tradition. The Hebrew language which we use, keeping the Sabbath and the Jewish holidays as is customary according to the calendar adopted by the State, and the fact that we live out our daily lives here in Israel – for example in government schools

and the military – all enable us to identify with the people of Israel, and express our identity as Jews and as an inseparable part of the people. Therefore, my conclusion is that, in particular, "American Messianic Judaism" serves the purposes of those Messianic Jews that prefer to remain in the countries of Diaspora, and refuse to make aliyah to Israel under various pretexts. In the Diaspora, Messianic Jews develop "Messianic Halacha" in order to preserve and perpetuate the state of Diaspora. In the Land of Israel, we do not need this kind of American import.

In conclusion, as Israeli Jews, our theology and nationalism is anchored in the Old and New Covenants alone, and just as we do not need to belong to an extremist political party in order to prove our loyalty to Israel, so we also do not need to adopt diasporic traditions in order to feel and state that we are part of this people. The High Court judges in Israel have by their ruling already removed us from the community of Israel – solely because of our faith in Yeshua. Therefore, keeping rabbinical traditions and the compilation of a "Messianic rabbinical *Halacha*" are not what will help us integrate into our people. Only in the State of Israel, after two thousand years of Diaspora, can Jewish followers of Yeshua live as Jews outside of the rabbinic halachic establishment.

(In the ideas shared above, I am following in the footsteps of *Haim Joseph Haimoff* (Bar-David 1905-1991), who for decades paved a unique path for disciples of Yeshua in the Land of Israel.)

## First Century Jewish Identity as a Model

### Joseph Shulam

#### Introduction

Every person has a variety of identities, particularly their personal and national identities. Neither of the two offers a lot of room for maneuvering, despite the fact that since the Enlightenment in Europe and the Declaration of Independence in the United States, there is a strong feeling in the West that identity is a private issue, open to free choice any time of the day or night. In fact, a person's identity is primarily determined by his national, cultural, ethnic, linguistic and faith affiliations. Most of these affiliations are attributed to a person, regardless of his personal preferences, before he ever draws his first breath.

Imagine a tall, blond, blue-eyed man enters this auditorium and in a perfectly clear voice declares: "I am a black African." I have no doubt that all the eyes in the room will raise their eyebrows in bewilderment and interpretations will begin to circulate, such as: "He only thinks that he is black!" "Maybe he was born in Africa and his parents gave him the name 'Black'." "Perhaps he's impersonating a black person?" "He's only teasing us!" However, it would be clear to all of us that regarding the question of identity, here we are talking about something peculiar and irregular.

The Bible recognizes the identity of the people of Israel as the people of God

Every person has different types of identity:

- a) His national identity, which is usually not acquired: a child who is taken from his parents in infancy and raised by strangers acquires the identity of his adoptive parents and the place where he is raised.
- b) One's personal identity is given to acquisition and change. For example, a person may study a profession and add another characteristic to his identity. A son is born to a man and he becomes a father, thus acquiring another characteristic of his identity and even a new name. A person receives a doctorate from university and his identity changes, etc.

An individual's personal identity derives from the following sources:

- a) The history that a person shares in common with his environment, including culture, language, and national and personal vision.
- b) The public opinion that shapes the character and behavioral patterns of the individual.

c) The willingness of a person to live in society and participate in community life and the personal sacrifice of the group to which he belongs. This might be the Lutheran, Methodist or Catholic Church or perhaps Islam, Buddhism or Judaism. A person's professional association, his guild, also attributes identity to a person; at times even the clothes that he wears are part of his identity.

### The National Identity of the People of God in the Holy Scriptures

The Bible recognizes the identity of the people of Israel as the people of God. In no place in the Old or New Covenants is there a divesting of the Israeli nation from their position as the people of God – in the past, the present, or the future. The same principle applies to all of the Land of Israel, and particularly to Jerusalem. The national identity of “God’s people” is always Israel. It remains Israel in the New Covenant and also at the second coming of the Messiah. According to the prophecies, the return of the Messiah is a return to Israel, the people of Israel and to Jerusalem. The Gentiles join the people of Israel. In the parable of the olive tree, the Gentiles are grafted

on to the natural, cultivated tree, but not in place of the pruned and burnt branches.

Jewish identity should be

Jewish identity should be defined by the Jewish People and not by a group of Gentile missionaries disguising themselves as Jews

defined by the Jewish People and not by a group of Gentile missionaries disguising themselves as Jews. A person cannot say that he is a “carpenter” if he has never held a hammer, nail, saw or awl in his life. If a person has never in his life made a bureau or wardrobe or table or door or any other thing that carpenters make in their daily labor, he cannot call himself a “carpenter.” The Apostle Shaul, in a biting argument with his opponents, said: “But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Messiah. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Messiah Yeshua my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Messiah” (Philippians 3:7-8). But at the same time, he knew who he was and his identity: “I was circumcised on the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew

of Hebrews; concerning the Torah, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the Torah, blameless” (Philippians 3:5-6).

I am not opposed to my Gentile brothers having their own identity, their own culture, and a style of worship that differs from mine, and even that they be Pentecostals, Lutherans, Baptists, or Afro-Americans. But as for me, the most important thing is the fact that the first congregation in Jerusalem, as described in the pages of the New Covenant, was a Messianic Jewish congregation, which was 100% faithful to our Lord Yeshua and 100% faithful to the Torah of Israel. By the same measure, Shaul the apostle was totally faithful to the Lord Yeshua, who revealed Himself to him on the road to Damascus, and also 100% faithful to the Torah of Moses and Israel.



Please refer to the following selections from the New Covenant Scriptures:

1. Matthew 5:17-20: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Torah till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”
2. 1 Corinthians 7:17-20: “But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the congregations. Was anyone called while circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Was anyone called while uncircumcised? Let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.”
3. Acts 21: 17-24: “And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Torah; but they have been informed about you

that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the Torah.”

The most important thing is the fact that the first congregation in Jerusalem, as described in the pages of the New Covenant, was a Messianic Jewish congregation, which was 100% faithful to our Lord Yeshua and 100% faithful to the Torah of Israel

4. Acts 24: 14-18: “But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Torah and in the Prophets. I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men. Now after many years, I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation, in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult.”
5. Acts 28: 17: “And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: ‘Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.’”

## From Mount Sinai to the Upper Room

Eitan Shishkoff

In order to fully express God's intent for Messianic Jewish life, we are called to maintain a spiritual harmony, which incorporates Torah celebration with the fullness of the Holy Spirit.

**Reflection upon Biblical Examples.** How does God intend to achieve this harmony of Law and Spirit? What is His plan? Here we are again, Messianic Jews in the Land of Israel. Do we have an example of the authority of the Spirit operating in a congregation grounded in the Torah? Yes, certainly - the first congregation of Messianic Jews in the Book of Acts. Yet, as Jews, we still find our roots in the Torah. So we must ask, "Does this concept of Spirit-empowered living exist in the Torah?" In other words, is there an example of a community that, while rooted in the Torah, demonstrates the power of the Holy Spirit? Yes - our powerful encounter with the sublime One who is above

In order to fully express God's intent for Messianic Jewish life, we are called to maintain a spiritual harmony, which incorporates Torah celebration with the fullness of the Holy Spirit

all, at Mount Sinai.

These two events essentially parallel one another in an awesome way and constitute the basis for the perspective represented here. Emphasis on the Torah (the written letter, the holidays, in a Jewish-historical context) without the operation of the Spirit of God (the power of the gifts of the Spirit, free worship, Holy Spirit-anointed preaching, teaching and testimony) leads to dryness and narrow legalism.

On the other hand, emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit without application of the Torah as a foundation for biblical Jewish identity, leads to an ungrounded spiritualism that is irrespective of the balance inherent in Scripture, and a disassociation with Israel as a people.

### 1. Mount Sinai: Leviticus 19: 16-20

- a. Revelation of God's truth through the written letter, a catalogue of laws.
- b. Demonstration of the supernatural power of God.
- c. The establishment and formation of the people of God on earth.

d. Paving a path for coming generations.

## 2. Jerusalem – “The Upper Room”: Acts 2: 1-16

- a. Took place on the day of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.
- b. Demonstration of supernatural power (the sound of a rushing wind, speaking in tongues).
- c. The establishment and formation of the first congregation of Yeshua.
- d. Paving a path for coming generations.

At Congregation *Ohalei Rachamim* (“Tents of Mercy”), we have experienced the blessing of the hand of God as we have celebrated the holidays of the Torah together and in our homes. At the same time, we seek the active involvement of the Holy Spirit by adopting the gifts of the New Covenant and fostering an open spirit of worship. I believe that the God of Israel always intended for these elements to be expressed in complete harmony, as in the two historical examples of Mount Sinai and Jerusalem. In the Book of Acts, the community of Messianic Jews was divided into two camps similar in essence to today’s body of believers in Israel: traditional-religious and secular-Jewish with Greco-Roman influence. Their strength and impact were realized through the same elements that we seek to adopt in the expression of our faith today:



- ❖ Yeshua was preached openly as the Messiah primarily through the living testimonies of the disciples.
- ❖ The Word of God was spread from house to house and the Torah was honored.
- ❖ The power of the Holy Spirit was demonstrated through answers to prayers.
- ❖ Material assistance for the needy was freely given.
- ❖ Apostolic teams were sent out to new regions in order to plant new congregations.

May God help us to reclaim the dynamism of the first-century pioneers, rooted in the covenant and the blessing of God, as we labor in the plentiful harvest. Yeshua was with them in His Holy Spirit in an electrifying way. They were the ones who provided us with the model of Messianic Jewish life in the Land of Israel.

## Questions and Answers, Comments and Responses

### Questions and Answers

**Zellah Goldberg**

**(Question directed at Joseph Shulam):**

If to be Jewish is an issue of history, personally, my background is from Colorado in the United States, but my identity is certainly here and there are certainly many others like me. So where do we stand?

**Joseph Shulam (Answer):**

You have joined the people of Israel, like my wife. You raised your children here and your children served in the military. You live here. Many American Messianic Jews that made *aliyah* since you have been here have returned to Colorado, to the United States and to other places. What I have to say to you and to people like you is: Welcome. Thank God that in the blood of Yeshua the Messiah you have joined the people of Israel. You who are from the nations of the world that have joined the people of Israel have a double blessing, like Ruth the Moabitess and Rahab and Naaman who discovered the God of Israel and served the God of Israel. May there be many more like you. Everyone who does his part and casts his lot with the Land of Israel and the people of Israel is 100% a part of the people. It is forbidden to say to a sincere proselyte<sup>1</sup>

or to a partial proselyte according to *Halacha* that he is a proselyte at all, and in the Torah it says: “One Torah shall be for you and the stranger who dwells among you.” Therefore it is forbidden to discriminate or differentiate, particularly since Yeshua shed His blood for the whole world.

**Zvi Sadan (Question):**

What about “Israel according to the flesh,” an expression used by Paul? None of the speakers explicitly addressed this subject. What was mentioned was that whoever doesn’t live like a Jew is not a Jew.

**Joseph Shulam (Answer):**

There are three *dimensions* to our being Jews. The first dimension is according to the flesh. A Jewish baby that is kidnapped and raised with Bedouin, for example, doesn’t know that he is Jewish, but as soon as he discovers his real identity, he is obligated to return to his people. A Jew that doesn’t know that he is a Jew still remains a Jew. That is Jewish according to the flesh. The second dimension is the Jew who knows that he is Jewish but nonetheless denies his Jewishness.

1) The words “proselyte” and “stranger” in

this context are both translations of the same Hebrew word: “Ger.”

He knowingly does not want to keep anything that recalls Judaism, and yet nonetheless, he is a Jew. “Israel despite his sin remains Israel.” The third dimension is the Jew that knows that he is a Jew, reads the Scriptures and is filled with the Holy Spirit and believes that Yeshua is the Messiah, and commits to do God’s will according to the Word of God. In my lecture I spoke of this Jew and not of the Jew according to the flesh or the Jew that is held captive and compelled by others to act against his will. I spoke of the Jew that believes in Yeshua the Messiah and has been immersed in water, born again and committed himself to obey God. This Jew must live as a Jew according to the Word of God and not according to the tradition of various churches.



we believe in Yeshua, they will say that we are Christians. I don’t suggest that we call ourselves Christians, of course not. I think that the emphasis needs to be more on faith and walking in the Holy Spirit.

### Joseph Shulam (Response):

It is true that Yeshua performed miracles on the Sabbath and cast out demons on the Sabbath. If you read the Rambam or “Shulhan Arukh,” or any other source about what Yeshua did on the Sabbath, you will not find any prohibition

against these things. So why did they criticize Yeshua so much? Because there were always extremists among the ultra-Orthodox and among the Christians that didn’t understand the Scriptures. Yeshua didn’t commit a single violation or break a single commandment, and did not teach others to violate the Torah, and that is the basis for His being the Messiah. If Yeshua had violated the Torah and He were sinful, He wouldn’t be the Messiah. And regarding the issue of people not accepting our Judaism even if we dress like ultra-Orthodox, it simply doesn’t matter, and it is also not true. I studied four years in an ultra-Orthodox yeshiva and the rabbi knew that I believed in Yeshua. In our congregation and Bible college (*Midrasha*) there are unbelieving ultra-Orthodox rabbis teaching with full knowledge that they are teaching Messianic Jews and they have no problem. The problem is generated in three areas: if they think that we are dishonest and trying to ensnare Jews and teach them against the Torah, then they are angry, that’s

## Comments and Responses

### Efrat Gerlich

#### (Comment directed to Joseph Shulam):

We can keep the commandments but are not obligated to do so. It is not our foundation. The Jew Simon Peter had a vision in which he saw unclean animals that God had purified. Here is a good example of how the commandments of the Torah are not binding. Yeshua, Himself, intentionally chose to perform miracles, healings and wonders on the Sabbath. I agree with Eitan Kashtan that commented that if we pretend to be good Jews, then supposedly people would accept us. Even if we dress like the ultra-Orthodox and act like them and say that

clear. If we do not sincerely keep the Torah, they are angry. And also if we do not accept them just as Christianity rejected them. They simply don't trust us. We don't project identification and trust.

### **Menahem Benhayim:**

“The counsel of the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations” (Psalm 33: 11). This important verse serves to balance the various things that were said. God works even well after our generation is gone, and we are only a small part in the workings of God among the people of Israel. All of us are in need of a little humility and modesty to understand that we don't know everything and nonetheless we are involved in everything. Let us try to understand that all of the disagreements and different perspectives are only part of the counsel of God in His restoration of the people of Israel to their national and Messianic roots. I do not hate the churches; I love the churches. I know that there are a lot of things in them that are not good, just as there are a lot of things that are not good in the synagogue, and I love the synagogue, yes. God used the synagogue to preserve the existence of the people of Israel, and He is still preserving us. Many secular people want to assimilate and to rid themselves of this burden of being ‘The Chosen People’. There are also many true-to-the-faith Christians who nonetheless hold to the view that our role as the chosen people has ended. We need to honor them and their contribution, but also the contribution of our people, including the religious sector, and to



disagree. Yeshua, who embodied the perfect love of God, criticized His people just as the prophets did. We also need to find this balance: boundless love, which includes criticism. This is the most difficult challenge we have in dealing with one another, coming from many different backgrounds.

### **Marcus Brodsky:**

As the spiritual sons of Abraham, let us pay attention to two passages in Genesis 26: 4-5 (the Word of God to Isaac): “And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.” We see that Abraham kept the commandments of God even before the giving of the Torah. What does this say to us?

### **Yoram Mizrachi:**

We first of all want our people to recognize us. In order for them to recognize us, the Messianic Jews, we need to be united and of one accord amongst ourselves. Another problematic issue is that there are different organizations in the Land that are committed to all kinds of organizations abroad because they receive contributions from them. They want to look nice and good, and to adopt the doctrines of the organization from abroad and bring it to the Land. Do we need to look good before God or before

the organization that is giving us money? I grew up in the Land in a traditional family and most of my friends from my neighborhood are traditional. The moment that I stop celebrating the holidays and say that it is permissible to eat all things, they will say that I am not a Jew, that is for certain. How do we expect our people to accept our Jewishness if we leave the Jewish tradition? I know that there are congregations that celebrate Christmas, and if you celebrate Passover they say: What, are you still sticking with the traditions?! We need to be more united in our perspective on the holidays and the traditions of Israel.

**Michael Greenspan:**

There are Chinese who are Baptists, for example, and they have remained good Chinese who are faithful to their people and their traditions. Why can't a Jew remain a good Jew, faithful to his Land and his people, and still be a Baptist or a Lutheran or a Presbyterian because he sees in them a good understanding of the Scriptures?

**Evan Thomas (Question):**

What about Jewishness according to the flesh? There is a problem with the new wave of immigrants from the former Soviet states. In Russia, many of the Jews grew up as secular people for all intents and purposes, without any observance of Judaism. They were nonetheless seen as Jews, in every sense of the word,

while here in the Land they are thought of as Russians who are barely Jewish.

**Responses and Concluding Statements by the Main Speakers**

**Eitan Kashtan:**

This is true; Abraham kept the Commandments of God before the giving of the Torah. This is not the question. I have already stated before that we are to keep the commandments of God. I said that this is Judaism, to keep the commandments of God, and this is our identity. When we want to maintain the identity of our people, what are we essentially speaking about? To keep the Jewish identity of the ultra-Orthodox who serve in the military or perhaps the ultra-Orthodox who do not serve in the military? Or to maintain the identity of the 80% of our people who are secular, and do not believe in God? If I am a Jew, no one can take my Jewishness away from me. We have reached the point of absurdity. Whoever doesn't believe that there is a God at all is a good Jew, but the one who believes in the Messiah of Israel has been made into a non-Jew only because he observes his faith in a particular way or eats in a certain manner. What kind of nonsense is this?! How can we place ourselves in a position like this? I am a Jew because I was born a Jew and more than that, because I inherit the promise of Abraham. That's what makes me a Jew. Regarding the keeping of tradition or the Torah, we spoke



of this earlier. There is freedom. I also agree with Gershon that we need to keep the Torah as Yeshua and the apostles taught us, and they gave us a measure of freedom. Shaul the apostle said that one regards one day and another regards another day. The New Covenant is the book that gives us the way today, so let's stick to it. What is forbidden, we will all forbid, and what is permitted, we will all permit, and let each one make his own decision about from what he is to abstain (where he has been given freedom to do so). A last comment: Calvin, Luther and others, despite our reservations which were mentioned earlier, and I agree with them, they are still good exegetes, so don't dismiss them with the wave of a hand. They are our brothers in the Messiah and there are things to be learned from them, even though their writings have no authority because only the Scriptures have authority over us. Rashi and Ibn Ezra were also outstanding exegetes and very wise. Their writings also have no authority over us, and also from them one can learn. Only remember that those that we so much want to embrace are not our brothers in the Messiah. Let us not disparage any exegesis simply because it comes from the Church. It may be that we have something to learn from them nonetheless.

#### **Gershon Nerel:**

Regarding the point that we should come together in humility and modesty, I



agree with Menahem. And in this context, we need to approach the Church at large in humility and modesty, since the Church is responsible for the canonization of the New Covenant, and we rely upon the New Covenant as a *fait accompli*. None of us is about to institute a different canonization or to determine that additional texts need to be added to the Canon. From this perspective, we give credit to the Church without accepting its traditions or its anti-Semitism.

#### **Eitan Shishkoff:**

We have things to learn from our Gentile believing brothers. There is no such thing as a Messianic Jew who is not influenced in one way or another by a Messianic movement or some form of Christianity, and this is not something to be ashamed of. It would actually be a shame if we Messianic Jews didn't know how to learn from our non-Jewish brothers.

\* \* \*

Hanan Lukatz Concluded and summarized the discussion with a passage that was on his heart: "For in the Messiah Yeshua neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything, but faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6).

Thank God for the faith that He has given us, the saving faith. Let everyone live by faith and the conviction that he is living accordingly, and let all these things be done in love.



# II PART TWO

**This issue is an English adaptation of the proceedings of a seminar on the topic:**

## **“The Trinity - What Do We Believe?”**

**Which was held in Hebrew at Moshav Yad Hashmona on February 7, 2003  
during the Annual Meeting of the Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel**

---

The original version of the seminar proceedings was  
published in the Hebrew edition of  
ZOT HABRIT (This is the Covenant)  
vol. 19, June 2004



## The Trinity –

### An Historical Perspective

#### Gershon Nerel

In the theology of the historical churches, the “Trinity” constitutes a central, uncontested doctrine, a dogma, in other words, “a religious truth determined by divine revelation and defined by the Church.” Under the Ottoman rule in the Land of Israel, as well as during the time of the British Mandate, when believers first began translating Christian/Church terminology to Hebrew, “Trinity” (Shilush) was not the sole term in use. At times the word “Shlischia” was used. After the establishment of the State of Israel, the “United Christian Council in Israel” (UCCI) published a glossary entitled “Christian Messianic Terms,”<sup>1</sup> in which the term “Shlasha”<sup>2</sup> appeared. According to “The Doctrine of the Trinity,” the one God exists in three persons, but is one being. This doctrine is defined as a “secret,” a “mystery,” and is received by faith, by revelation, without any logical proof, although it does not necessarily contradict human reasoning.

The term “Trinity” in its Greek and Latin forms (trias, trinitas) first appeared during

the latter years of the second century CE. As is commonly known, the term does not appear in the Old or New Covenants. Nonetheless, it is important to note that Yeshua Himself spoke of the “triple” immersion, if one can call it that – “In the

Historically, even from the beginning of the Jewish community of believers in Yeshua (“The Circumcised”), controversies arose regarding the relationship between the three components of the “Trinity”: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). It is also worthy to note the following verse: “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one” (1 John 5:7).<sup>3</sup> In addition, the concept of plurality in the Divine union appears in the Scriptures in the very phrase “The Lord is one,” “God is one” – one (*echad*) rather than singular (*yachid*). This is the case, for example, even when the word pair “Lord God” appears in the Hebrew Scriptures (2 Samuel 7:18-19 & 28, Genesis 2:8-9).

Many lengthy historical disagreements revolved around the definition of the Trinity.

1) Edited by Robert Lindsey (Hebrew, English, French, Arabic), Jerusalem 1976, p. 8.

2) Like the Hebrew word for “Trinity” (Shilush) commonly used today, the variations *Shlischia* and *Shlasha* derive from the Hebrew root for the number three.

3) Not in all manuscripts.

This is the most prevalent question that arose in the past, and it exists to this day: Is there full and absolute equality between the three elements of the ‘Godhead’?

It is important to note that we are not treating a solely philosophical, intellectual debate. Rather, the subject of the unity of the Godhead has practical implications for the life of the believer and the management of congregational frameworks.

In the course of history, the positions of Orthodoxy, “the correct faith”, and “heresy” in the form of various sects, were established, each being recognizable by their stance on the doctrine of the Trinity and by their recognition or denunciation by a recognized, ordained body. Thus, many versions of the articles of faith appeared, and alongside them the names of corresponding heretics.

Historically, even from the beginning of the Jewish community of believers in Yeshua (“The Circumcised”), controversies arose regarding the relationship between the three components of the “Trinity”: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In the first centuries of the Common Era, there were two main streams among the Jewish believers in Yeshua. One stream, the Ebionites, rejected faith in the divinity of Yeshua, attributing to Yeshua only a human nature. Accordingly, the

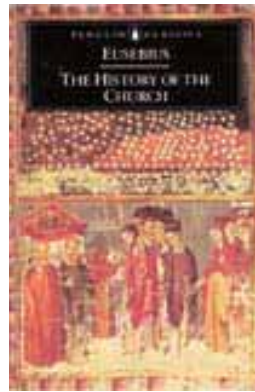
Ebionites proposed that Yeshua was born by a completely natural birth and not by a miraculous virgin birth. The Nazarenes, in contrast, believed that Yeshua had already existed as the Word, the Logos, before He became flesh and came to dwell on earth. The Ebionites also did not have a clear stand concerning the Holy Spirit. The various Church Fathers, both the Greeks in the east, and the Latins in the west, regarding their definition of the faith as orthodox doctrine, viewed the Jewish Ebionites as heretics.

It is especially interesting that the Church Fathers did not reject the Ebionites alone, but the Nazarenes as well. The leading theologians of the Church were not satisfied with the invalidation of the Ebionites because of their negation of the divinity of Yeshua. Eventually the Church Fathers invalidated the Nazarenes as well, because the Nazarenes, like the Ebionites, desired to preserve a distinct Jewish identity. In other words, despite the fact that the Nazarenes believed that Yeshua existed even before His birth to Miriam, and accepted His supernatural birth and believed in His divinity, nonetheless, the Church Fathers were disturbed by the self-definition of Nazarenes as Torah-observant Jews. Thus, for example, Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo in North Africa, who had great authority and influence in the Church from the fifth century onward, determined the fate of the Nazarenes, relegating them to a sect banned by the Church; he saw the Nazarenes as followers of Yeshua

who “Judaize” the Church through observance of commandments such as the circumcision, the Sabbath, kosher laws and biblical holidays. Augustine defined both the Nazarenes and the Ebionites as heretics, despite the fact that the Nazarenes did not in fact qualify as such.

Augustine followed in the footsteps of Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea in the fourth century, who also took a stand against the early Messianic Jews who kept the commandments of the Torah in antiquity.<sup>1</sup> At that time in the Church, which was already composed mainly of Gentiles, the “problem” according to the Gentile theologians, was that all of the Jews that believed in Yeshua kept the commandments of the Torah. The latter based their daily lives on the words of Yeshua in the Sermon on the Mount, which states that the Messiah did not come to abolish the Torah and the Prophets but rather to fulfill them (Matthew 5:17).

In other words, the center of gravity in the early theological thought traversed clear boundaries, shifting from the



realm of the divinity of Yeshua to the domain of the distinct national identity of the Jewish disciples of Yeshua. Torah-observant Jews of various kinds, whether they rejected the divinity of Yeshua or accepted His full divinity, were perceived to be anomalies, and were expelled from the Church, particularly under the accusation of heresy. In their writings, the

Church Fathers did not bother to clearly distinguish between the Ebionites and the Nazarenes, and essentially discovered a new problem – “The Jewish Problem” – no longer a Christological problem focusing on the nature of the Messiah.

Actually, the same questions that arose in Antiquity concerning the theology of the divinity of Yeshua on the one hand, and maintenance of a Jewish lifestyle in Messianic Jewish circles, on the other, exist to this very day. Nowadays, as in the early centuries, the concept and reality of Torah observance in light of the words of Yeshua are not directly or necessarily related to the subject of the rejection of Yeshua’s divinity. Keeping the Torah, which was given to Israel, especially according to the clear teaching of Yeshua and by the leading of the Holy Spirit, and not according to the Jewish Halacha (practice) tradition of men, is not in the realm of heresy against the Godhead.

It is worthwhile to note that in contrast to the situation that characterized the

---

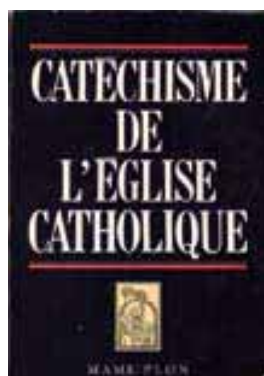
1) See Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea, *The Church Chronicles* (Hebrew), Caspari/Akademion, Jerusalem 2001, pp. 91-92. Cf. Gershon Nerel, “Eusebius’s Ecclesiastical History and the Modern Yeshua-Movement: Some Comparisons,” *Mishkan*, 39 (2003): 65-86.

first two hundred years of the Common Era, since the third century, most of the churches and their believers had already canonized the basic text of the New Covenant, which included the four Gospels and the 13-14 Epistles of Saul/Paul. This Canon includes texts that served as a basis for the definition of the faith on the subject of Yeshua's divinity. In addition, the first ecumenical Church Council that was held in Nicaea in 325 CE became an important turning point in the definition of faith in the Messiah and His divinity. This council was called in order to oppose the Arian heresy. The Arians rejected Yeshua's divinity. They opined that the Son of God did not exist from the beginning of creation, and was not born of the Father (Psalm 2:7), but was entirely created by the Father ex nihilo, in order to create the world through Him. According to their teaching, Yeshua was not divine in nature and substance, but was a changing creation, who received the honor of the Son of God based upon the righteousness and glory that would be His in the future.

The Council of Nicaea, sponsored by the Caesar Constantine, unequivocally determined that the Father and the Son are entirely co-equal and co-eternal. The terminology used in that period concerning the substantive identity between the Father and the Son were *homoousios* in Greek, and *consubstantio*

in Latin. These terms express the desire to attribute full equality to the Father and Son within the Godhead.

From the fifth until the eighth century, a different problem plagued the Church, a heresy called "Adoptionism". According to this doctrine, God the Father adopted Yeshua as a Son when John the Baptist immersed Him in the Jordan River and a voice was heard from the heavens that said, "This is My beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17). The followers of this teaching believed that Yeshua was a man of flesh and blood, who was adopted as the Son of God due to His lofty attributes and special merits, and was elevated to divine status. This position was rejected as heresy by the Church Council at Ephesus in 431 CE, but reappeared in the West in the eighth century.<sup>1</sup>



In the Catholic Church Catechism, the basic book on the essential elements of the Catholic faith, which was updated and republished in 1992, all of the statements of faith formulated at the first Council of Nicaea (325 CE) were affirmed. Most of the Protestant churches in their various denominations also did not challenge the dogmas established at Nicaea, apart from a few groups,

---

1) See "Adoptionism," The Hebrew Encyclopedia, vol. 1, Jerusalem/Tel Aviv 1968-9, p. 486.

including the Unitarians, who, from the time of the Reformation to this day, reject the idea of the Trinity and the divinity of Yeshua.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note that we are not treating a solely philosophical, intellectual debate. Rather, the subject of the unity of the Godhead has practical implications for the life of the believer and the management of congregational frameworks. To this day, there are groups that immerse new believers in water only in the name of Yeshua. In other words, without mentioning the name of the Father and the Holy Spirit during the time of the immersion. This anti-Trinitarian perspective characterizes, for example, a stream called Oneness Pentecostalism. Another group that negates the divinity of Yeshua and the principle of the Trinity is the “Jehovah’s Witnesses”.<sup>2</sup> Currently, both groups have active representation in Israel.

However, to this day the essential controversy regarding the Trinity does not concern the unity that exists in the

“one circle” of the Godhead, but rather the question whether or not it is possible to explain this unity in a schematic fashion – either horizontally or vertically. Namely, is there a mathematical formula in which the Father, the Son and the

We need to be able to distinguish between the need to preserve continuity of those principles of faith which we affirm and which have become rooted in the churches, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the need to promote theological restoration and reinterpretation, not only regarding the Trinity.

Spirit are entirely equal in substance, position, operation and eternal nature (a horizontal line)? Or alternatively, is there a clear vertical functional hierarchy within the divine unity? The latter speaks of a graduated structure within the divine unity that does not detract from the divine nature of Yeshua, the Son of God. Stated differently, in the wondrous unity of the Godhead there exists a special and perfect division of function, in which the Father nonetheless is positioned over all, since the Father Himself never became flesh and blood and was not crucified in this world; rather, the Son submitted to the Father, the Son hears the Father’s voice and sits at His right hand in heaven, and He is the One that sends the Holy Spirit to those who fear Him. In the vertical perspective

1) See Joshua Praver, “Controversial Principles of the Christian Faith during the Reformation,” in H.A.L. Fisher, *A History of Europe* (Hebrew), vol. 2, Book 3 appendix), Bialik Institute, Massada Publishing Co., Jerusalem/Tel Aviv 1963-4, pp. 197-208.

2) See, for example, *Christianity and Christians in the Land of Israel* (Hebrew), Ed. G. Barkai & E. Schiller, Ariel Series, No. 155-156, Jerusalem 2002, p. 279, and p. 183.

of the unity of God, the words of Yeshua “for My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28), on the one hand, and His statement that “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30), on the other hand, naturally complement one another.



770 Lubavitch replica  
in Kfar Habad

An interesting point: In the Jewish world of the great Hassidic rabbis, the Messiah is increasingly represented as a divine image that has taken on flesh and blood. The Chabad Movement, for example, believes that the rabbi from Lubavitch, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, that passed away in 1994, is the “creator of the world,” possessing indubitably divine characteristics. His followers also attribute to this false messiah the characteristics of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, i.e. “the messiah that died on behalf of others;” they also expect his resurrection from the dead.

At any rate, the foremost question before us today is this: Can the term “Trinity” express a faith based entirely upon the Old and New Covenants, and if so, why not use this term? Are we wary of the expression “Trinity” only because of theological problems associated with creeds formulated by the historical churches, which do not necessarily reflect the literal interpretation of the Old and New Covenants? Or do we primarily have emotional and psychological concerns regarding our national identity? In other

words, is our rejection of the concept of the “Trinity” due to our unwillingness to associate with the history of paganism in the Church, and our struggle against anti-Semitism in the Church?

We are indeed facing a complex problem – we need to be able to distinguish between the need

to preserve continuity of those principles of faith which we affirm and which have become rooted in the churches, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the need to promote theological restoration and reinterpretation, not only regarding the Trinity. Our worthy contribution towards explaining the theological phenomenon of Israel in God’s plan (the People, the Land, and the State), is a good example of the success of such efforts. In other words, we need to refine the principles of our faith in light of Church history, and in light of the reality in which we live - through scriptural interpretation led by the Holy Spirit, of course.

In addition, apart from the difficulty with the concept of the “Trinity,” there is a tendency amongst us to emotionally and intellectually recoil from the use of “Gentile” terminology – terms such as “Christian” or “Jesus of Nazareth,” which already appear in the New Covenant (Matthew 26:71; John 19:19). So, on second and third thought, it seems to me that we do not have principled reasons to be wary of the term “Trinity.” Among

our predecessors there have been individuals, among them Rachmiel Frydland, that explained that “the Trinity is Jewish.”

Therefore, just as we adopt the New Covenant axiomatically as a holy text, as a direct and natural continuation of the Old Covenant, so there is nothing to prevent us from adopting, for example, even the expression “Trinity.” But, this also does not mean that we need to automatically adopt existing Church creeds, but rather to use the term “Trinity” in a technical linguistic framework – again, without mindlessly adopting the definitions that already exist regarding the Trinity. In other words, we need use the Hebrew language to fill our theological interpretation (an interpretation that is undergoing renewal) with clear and biblical content; enough terms exist in biblical and modern Hebrew to sufficiently express our faith.

In conclusion, we have no small challenge before us, particularly in light of the long history of two thousand years behind us.<sup>1</sup> We need to match our thoughts to the Word of God, and to nothing else, as it is written: “Yet the House of Israel says, ‘The way of the Lord is not fair.’ O House of Israel, is it not My ways which are fair, and your ways which are not fair?” (Ezekiel 18:29).

Concerning one thing there is no doubt: In the process of transition from groups of individual believers to a broad movement that is crystallizing and becoming more visible, a movement whose members value the education of new believers, it is impossible to avoid differentiating between issues of true doctrine versus false teachings. In this, there is nothing new under the sun, and the need remains to clarify the whole truth with courage and persistence, without embarking upon a personal or congregational “witch hunt,” but for the purpose of testing all things thoroughly and seriously. According to the words of the Apostle Paul: “Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thessalonians 5:21,22).



Jan Huss, Czech Reformer (1369-1415)  
Martyred as heretic for his views

© 2007. All rights reserved to Gershon Nerel.

1) Compare, for example: Ora Limor, *Between Jews and Christians* (Hebrew), vol. 1, The Open University, Tel Aviv 1993, pp. 110-115.

## The Corporeal Revelation of God in the Hebrew Scriptures

### Asher Intrater

The Gospel of John 1:18 states: “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” Three times in the New Covenant it says that no one has ever seen God: first in this verse, and again in John 6:46 and 1 Timothy 6:16.

It is interesting that all of the Church Fathers agree on this point, as do the Jewish Sages. One of the thirteen principles of the *Rambam* (Maimonides) says about God: “He has no semblance of a body, nor is He corporeal.”

It seems that according to one perspective in the Hebrew Scriptures, man does not see God, but according to another perspective, man does see Him. Is it any wonder that we have disputes over the issue?

Let us refer now to the Book of Genesis, chapter 18. In Torah portion “*Vayera*” it is written: “Then the Lord appeared to him.” In other words, Abraham saw God, Y.H.W.H. There is a certain problem here. On the one hand it is written that no man has ever seen God, but in Genesis it says that Abraham did see Him. How exactly? Verse 2 says: “Behold, three

men were standing by him.” Without a doubt, Abraham saw God. But how is it that there were three men there? Are they the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? No! So who were they?

Genesis 19:1 states: “Now the two angels came to Sodom in the evening.” Two of the people that appeared to Abraham traveled to Sodom. If so, where was the third Man? Two angels descended to Sodom, and the third remained with Abraham. This third man remained, ate meat and milk and conversed with Abraham. Five times in the chapter He is called Y.H.W.H., and there is no doubt that He appeared to Abraham in the form of a man.

How do we resolve this contradiction? It seems that according to one perspective in the Hebrew Scriptures, man does not see God, but according to another perspective, man does see Him. Is it any wonder that we have disputes over the issue? Even in the Hebrew Scriptures there are seeming contradictions.

Exodus 24: 9-11 tells of people again seeing God: “Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel.” What did they see exactly? “Under His feet...” They did not see only Him, they saw feet... human limbs – “a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did

not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.” They saw “God.” This is another instance of the children of Israel seeing God in the form of a man. Again, on the one hand it says in the Hebrew Scriptures that no man has ever seen God, and on the other hand, there are people who do see Him.

If so, God has a side that we do not see – and that is our Father in heaven. And God has a side that is seen in the form of a man.

We will examine another example in which God appears in the form of a man. Joshua 5:13 tells of an event that occurred to Joshua immediately preceding the capture of Jericho: “And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand.” Joshua sees a figure, he sees a man. “And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, ‘Are You for us or for our adversaries?’ So He said, ‘No, but as Commander of the Army of the Lord I have now come’”. In verse 15, the Army Commander says to Joshua: “Take your sandal off your foot.” Joshua obeyed and fell down and worshipped Him. This story is reminiscent of the Burning Bush. Who can say to man: “Take your sandal off your foot,” and request that he worship Him? Either God or Satan. It cannot be only an angel. If so, there is Someone in this story that appears in the form of a man, in the role of the

When we wish to settle a theological issue, it is best that we return to our source – to the Hebrew Scriptures – not to the writings of the Jewish Sages, nor to the decrees of the Church Fathers.

Commander of the Heavenly Hosts, but He does not say that He is God. At the same time, He takes the place of God and says that the place upon which Joshua stands is holy, and even requests that Joshua worship Him. Joshua, as we already mentioned, obeyed.

Again the figure appears that we see in other places in the Old Covenant – One who is God, but not God – the Angel of the Lord, His Military Commander, the Messenger of God. He distinguishes between Himself and God, and at the same time, claims the authority and holiness of God.

Ezekiel 1 (which by the way, the Jewish Sages say is forbidden to read, and that one who reads it is likely to become insane or convert to Christianity) says that the prophet saw the glory of the Lord, the pillar of fire. The end of verse 26 says: “And above the firmament over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; on the likeness of the throne was a likeness with the appearance of a man high above it.” In other words, above the glory of the

Lord there is a throne, and above it sits One who has the appearance of a man. If so, this is the figure that appeared throughout the Hebrew Scriptures - Someone that on the one hand is called God and on the other, is distinguished from God. This is the Angel of the Lord, God in the form of a man.

Indeed, there is a figure that is seen throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, and in my opinion, represents the solution to all of our theological disputes on the subject. When we wish to settle a theological issue, it is best that we return to our source – to the Hebrew Scriptures – not to the writings of the rabbinical Sages, nor to the decrees of the Church Fathers. We can turn to our Scriptures, written in the Hebrew language, to seek out the appropriate terminology to express our faith. This figure is a key figure, and we need to

The Angel of the Lord, His Military Commander, the Messenger of God - He distinguishes between Himself and God, and at the same time, claims the authority and holiness of God.

understand Him and explain Him to our people. As an evangelist, I want all of my people to believe in the Messiah. When I speak with them, I want to put my best foot forward, and not begin by apologizing and defending terms such as the “Trinity.” I do want to say, “Let’s look at what is written

in our Hebrew Scriptures, in Joshua 5 and Ezekiel 1, Exodus 24 and the story of our father, Abraham.” I am not in need of terms formulated by Christianity over the years. The Hebrew Scriptures supply my needs. If we understand this point, we will be able to more easily share our faith and moderate some of the disagreements between us.

Each decision has three aspects: political, ideological and strategic (explanatory). We are now dealing with the ideological aspect: Who is God? What essentially is He? There are also party politics. The truth is that there are parties even among us, more exactly, camps, and this is a shame. Even if we agree with one another before God, the question is how we should explain these things to our people.

A verse from Psalm 45 is quoted in Hebrews 1:8: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.” From the context in the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is clear that the word “God” relates to the Messiah, the King Messiah who sits on His throne. Yet in the following verse, we read: “Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You.” In other words, in verse 8 the word “God” is relating to the Messiah, and in verse 9, “God” refers to our Father in heaven, not to the Messiah. These facts complicate the issue. Let us turn for a moment to Psalm 82:1: “A Psalm of Asaph. God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods.” Verse 6 (that Yeshua Himself quoted in John 10:34), says: “I said, ‘You are gods,

and all of you are children of the Most High.” Incredible! It seems that in this Psalm the word “God” refers not only to our Father in heaven and not only to the Messiah that sits on the throne, but also to all of the angels and even to men who have received the Word of God.

We ask why there are theological disputes amongst us. Our view on the issue can be divided into three groups. One group says that our Father in heaven alone is God. The second group says that God is not only our Father in heaven, but also the Messiah. The third group relates the word “God” – God forbid! – not only to our Father in heaven and to the Messiah, but also to the angels and even to believers. Which group is correct?

I will summarize my opinion on the subject. If someone asks me who I am, I say: “I was born again, received the Holy Spirit, and I have eternal life by the grace of Yeshua.” And if someone asks me: “Asher, are you God?” My answer would be: “No, no and yes.” In other words, not in the first or second senses, but since according to Hebrews and 2 Peter, I received the nature of God, then, yes. In this context one can say of our Father in heaven that He is God: “Yes, yes and no,” and of Yeshua: “No, yes and yes.” If you ask me if Yeshua is God, I will say: “Yes,” but there is also a certain sense in which He is not God, the sense in which “God” refers only to our Father in heaven.

I am not suggesting a final, well-

formulated answer here, but another perspective, another option. God gave us the task to develop original interpretation, based upon the Hebrew Scriptures,



taking into account the writings of the Jewish Sages and the Church Fathers. But let us rise to the task and try to read the Scriptures ourselves, let us try

to understand what is written there. This may moderate the disputes between us. I see before my eyes two camps: those who do not wish to say that Yeshua is God or use the term “Trinity,” and those for whom it is very important to say that Yeshua is God. We need to understand that the people from the first camp usually do not deny the divinity of Yeshua, but it is not easy for them to declare that “Yeshua is God” without offering an explanation, and it is difficult for them to use the word “Trinity.” To these, I wish to say: “You need to understand that the divinity of Yeshua is essential and important. God forbid if we ignore this and turn in a different direction. Let us try to work towards reinforcing patience and unity among us, without relating to words.”

My prayer is that God will pour out His Spirit upon us and fill us with love, long suffering, patience and humility, and that we will bring our people the truth of the Scriptures and salvation in Yeshua the Messiah. Amen.

## The Nature of the Messiah

### Baruch Maoz

I have no doubt that we can get along very well without the label “Trinity,” but it is clear that we cannot do well without making a clear, unequivocal declaration regarding the divinity of Yeshua.

Let us turn to the Epistle to the Philippians 2:5 and onward. We need to remember that theology is never an intellectual exercise or something intended to make us smart or turn us into intellectuals. Theology teaches us how to live. “Let this mind be in you which was also in Messiah Yeshua.” Verses 6-11 give us more information about the “mind that was in Messiah Yeshua”: “Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Yeshua every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” Saul had no doubt that Yeshua took upon Himself true humanity. Throughout our discussion of

the divinity of Yeshua, let us not forget His humanity.

Saul says that Yeshua “took the form of a bondservant and came in the likeness

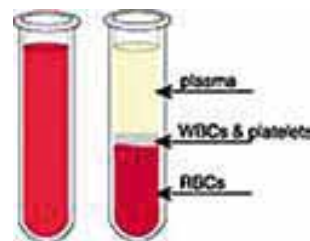
His blood was red, hot and moist, type A, B or O, etc., composed, like our blood, of red cells, white platelets and plasma.

of man” (v. 7). We will relate for a moment to the word “form,” translated from the Greek word “Morphe,” which means “essential form.” This word relates to the sum of all of the essential characteristics that distinguish one thing from another. For example: the morphology of a mammal distinguishes it from the morphology of a fish or a bird. The morphology of a whale distinguishes it from the morphology of a shark. The morphology is what makes the distinction. Similarly, in linguistics, morphology, which is the linguistic structure of a word or sentence, is what determines the character of the sentence itself. In Romans 8:29, Saul uses the word morphology to note that those who have been saved will be changed by the power of the Spirit of God, until they conform to the “Morphe,” the image of Yeshua. He is not of course implying that we will resemble Him physically, although we wouldn’t be opposed, because then we would all be beautiful. He means that we will be

changed in our essential inner being. It is clear that God has no image, and when people were made in His image, in His “Morphe,” this is in order for us to be partners in His plan. Also when Saul spoke about being conformed to the Messiah in reference to His death on the cross (Philippians 3:10), he did not mean that he would die on the cross, but that he would live, suffer and die for the same purpose for which the Messiah died: for the Congregation. If so, Saul is essentially saying that Yeshua took upon Himself all of the “Morphe,” all of the human essence, all of the qualities that characterize man as man. His humanity was real, tangible, perfect, complete and comprehensive. It was so real, that there is no place to doubt it. Yeshua was human in the same way that each of us is human, and in all of the same senses, apart from sin. Sin is not a part of the human character, but rather a distortion that permeated this character. Sin is a perversion.

The words of Saul are clear. Yeshua took upon Himself all of that which characterizes humanity: physical growth, emotional qualities, dependency upon oxygen, food and drink, physical tiredness, including the need to sleep, and a feeling of refreshment on a sun-flooded morning after a blessed night’s sleep. When He was a baby, He needed to be fed. He hiccupped if he ate too quickly, and maybe even spit up sometimes. He felt the cold of the Nazareth and

Jerusalem nights. He was very likely not blond, but there is no doubt that His hair grew and He needed to cut it. On hot days, He certainly smelled of sweat after a long day’s work in Joseph’s carpentry shop or after a vigorous walk on the hills of the Galilee. His pain was real pain, His death was a real death and His blood was red, hot and moist, type A, B or O, etc., composed, like our blood, of red cells, white platelets and plasma. Like us, He was exposed to temptations and needed to deal with them like every other man. Yeshua took upon Himself true humanity.



Saul says that Yeshua was “found in appearance as a man” (Philippians 2:7). The humanity that He took upon

Himself was apparent. He looked like what He became, He took upon Himself the external qualities as well as the internal ones: five fingers, two hands, two legs, two ears, one nose. He became a man and looked like a man. I hope that I do not need to bring many proofs regarding this topic.

After becoming so human, Yeshua took upon Himself all human responsibilities: He obeyed (v. 8). Yeshua was a faithful Jew and therefore obeyed all of the Torah of God as it was given at Sinai. This is an aspect of His humanity. He was subject to the Torah, it was

forbidden for Him to steal, lie, profane God's name, covet and commit adultery, profane the Shabbat or bow before false gods, and He needed to worship God alone. He was required to honor His mother, Miriam, and his adoptive father, Joseph. He was subject to all of the commandments of the covenant of Moses: He was forbidden to eat pork or to cook a calf in its mother's milk. He needed to keep the holidays and avoid wearing sha'atnez – hybridized garments.

These requirements and the rest of the requirements of the Torah Yeshua kept willingly, lovingly, completely and enthusiastically. No one could accuse Him of violating the Torah (John 8:46). He obeyed. He had a full and complete humanity, like that which was destined for all mankind, a humanity that the first man lost for us all, when he sinned. (This is also an important aspect of the justification of the Messiah, and if it were the central topic of the conference, I would be happy to go into greater detail on this point).

Saul continues and says that Yeshua's obedience was "to the point of death." There was a reason for which Yeshua became a man. In order to fulfill this purpose or this destiny, He needed to become one of us, a man, since He came to atone for the sins of humanity and save us from our hopeless situation. As a perfect man that never sinned, He

did not have to die. "The soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4). But because He obeyed God the Father, Yeshua did not only keep all of what the Law of Moses required of us, but also bore the punishment that it decreed for us, and obeyed according to the will of the Father in order to serve as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. In this way Yeshua ensured the salvation of sinners, and also completely fulfilled all of the requirements of God's Law. Yeshua obeyed on our behalf "to the point of death". In His death, He supplied another dimension of righteousness. Yet He could not do so without being a man, and so represent us. Therefore, Yeshua became a man and is a man to this day. Today sitting at God's right hand is one of us, a man, a Jew.

But Yeshua is not only a man and was not only a man. Saul clarifies in verse 7, for example, that this amazing, wonderful, full, true humanity of Yeshua was unnatural for Him. He came and took it upon Himself, and became a man (v. 7). Before that He was something else. A change occurred in Him that made Him a man, a change that was not forced upon Him, but rather willingly adopted by Him. He took on the form of a bondservant. Yeshua was not a man that became God or resembled God, or that received some kind of divine nobility. These phenomena appear only in pagan literature and Greek and Roman mythology. They have no place

in the Messianic congregation or in the heart of the Messianic. Before Yeshua was a man He was something else, different from a man. What was He?

The answer is found in the first part of this chapter of Philippians. Saul describes Yeshua there: “Who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.” We already discussed the word “Morphe” and saw that it notes the essential nature of things, the “sum of all of the characteristics that distinguish between one thing and another.” So, Yeshua was in the form, in the “Morphe,” of God. In other words, Saul determines that before Yeshua became a man, He was God. He had the sum of characteristics that distinguish God from everything else. He was immortal, self-generated, entirely holy, glorious beyond imagine. He knew everything, was ever-present and was able to do everything according to His holy will.

We don’t need to be surprised by this description of Yeshua. It parallels others in many places in the New Covenant. Before Yeshua became a man, He was God, or as Saul says in his epistle, “equal with God.” In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, it doesn’t say “The Word became God” but rather “the Word was God,” always was, even before the creation. This is how He always was. And during the time that He “was God,” He also “was with God.”

Yeshua is equal to God, yet God has no equal or likeness. Saul is not speaking in terms of a graduated Godhead, or of a Godhead that exists on different

The word “poured out” means emptied, poured out from one vessel to another. Thus Yeshua poured out His divinity into His humanity, without losing His divinity, and without changing His divine character.

levels, a sort of big god, a slightly lesser god and a little god. Whoever thinks so, thinks that there are many gods, that each possess varying diminishing degrees of divine qualities. This is not the case. We know that there is only one God, and we understand that in this one God there is a mystery. He is one and more than one at the same time. Not that there are two or three gods, but that this one God is more than one. Not that there are two or three divine characters, but that this divine character is more than one.

These things are beyond our understanding, but the facts are clearly presented in the Holy Scriptures, and we have no choice but to receive them, even if people laugh at us, even if they say that it is illogical. Whoever says such a thing is essentially stating that God does not succeed in squeezing Himself into the narrow, limited,

pathetic framework of human logic. Is that any surprise? God is greater than anything that man is able to imagine.

Saul says that Yeshua surrendered all of His rights, miracles and glory that accompanied His divinity in order to become a man. Saul presents Yeshua as an example and model of humility and modesty from which we should learn. He calls us to demonstrate the same spirit that characterized Yeshua when He did what He did. How did Yeshua model selfless humility? “Who being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8).

What does it mean that He “did not consider it robbery to be equal with God?” This well-known Greek word “Harpagos” may be translated in two senses: “to steal” (But God doesn’t need to steal His divinity), or “to hold, to grasp,” and that is what Yeshua did. He didn’t hold on to the honor of His divinity, rather He made it of no repute. We should relate to the words “made of no reputation.” Does this mean that Yeshua stopped being God when He became a man? God forbid! How can



God lose His identity? How can God stop being Himself? Saul is not speaking of any change in the divine nature of Yeshua, but of something that was added to the divine

nature. Rather than demanding the privileges associated with His divinity, Yeshua took upon Himself full and complete humanity. He became a man. He made Himself of no reputation, but did not negate His own identity. We are familiar with the words “made Himself of no reputation” from Isaiah 53: “Because He poured out His soul unto death.” The word “poured out” means emptied, poured out from one vessel to another. Thus Yeshua poured out His divinity into His humanity, without losing His divinity, and without changing His divine character. Therefore Yeshua did not cease being God when He became a man, but rather poured out His divinity into His humanity.

In this chapter of Philippians, Saul has more to say regarding the divinity and humanity of Yeshua, but we have no more time left today. Therefore we will say only that Yeshua was rewarded for His deeds: “Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Yeshua every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Yeshua the Messiah is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

What is the name that is “above every name”? Whoever knows the Hebrew Scriptures a little knows that Saul is quoting from Isaiah 45:18-25. God is addressing the people there and describing Himself as the One who created the heavens and formed the earth: “I am the Lord, and there is no other,” He says in verse 18. And at the end of verse 20, He invites the idol worshippers to counsel with their wooden gods, described by Him as “a god that cannot save.” In contrast, He Himself declared in the distant past what would be in the future (v. 21): “Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, A just God and a Savior. There is none besides Me.” Those who seek salvation are invited in verse 22: “Look to Me, and be saved, All you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.”



According to Isaiah, God states that He alone is God, and that only He can save. Therefore He invites His audience to turn to Him and be saved. In the following portion, He declares His decision to be glorified by all as Lord and Savior: “I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness; and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath” (v. 23). To Me – to God – shall every knee bow, every

tongue take an oath. Is it not clear from these words of Isaiah what is the “name above every name” that the Father gave to the Son? It is the Tetragrammaton, Y.H.W.H, the name of God that we articulate as “Lord”. “To Him men shall come, and all shall be ashamed who are incensed against Him. In the Lord all the descendants of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory.”

This is the wonderful selfless act of the Messiah, the Son of God. He descended from His glory and became one of us without losing His character. He took upon Himself the form of a bondservant and died even though He didn’t need to die – certainly not on the cross, to become accursed of God. He did this on our behalf. These are the sacrifices that He sacrificed. We need to be the same: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Messiah Yeshua...” Love one another whatever the cost and be certain “that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God” (Philippians 1:27-28).

Thanks be to God for His indescribably great gift!

## Who is the Holy Spirit?

Victor Smadja

When we want to examine the character, the nature of the Holy Spirit, we need to rely on the Word of God alone. We live among our people, a people that do not and did not receive Yeshua or the divinity of the Holy Spirit. If it is difficult for us to understand the character of our spirit as a man, it will be difficult for us to understand the character of the Spirit of God, particularly if we do not examine the subject in the Word of God. We need to check whether the Holy Spirit is only a power, a local temporary influence, or if He is indeed the Spirit of God, who is an entity and is similar in nature to Yeshua, and who, together with God the Father, is part of the one God.

Rather than a divine entity, the people of Israel see the Holy Spirit as the influence of the will of God, a supernatural power that can do and that enables people to do special things. According to this thinking, the Holy Spirit is a temporary, ephemeral, passing influence that moves on without leaving a trace.

However, this is not the way the Word of God describes the Holy Spirit. In the book of Numbers 11:17, God speaks with Moses about the elders of Israel: "Then I will come down and talk with you there. I will take of the Spirit that is upon you and will put the same upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, that you may not bear it yourself alone." God wanted to take from the Spirit that He gave to Moses and delegate it to the elders, who would help



Moses lead the people of Israel.

The Word of God teaches that the Holy Spirit is an independent entity, active and eternal. It is the Holy Spirit that gives prophecy to a man. The Holy Spirit speaks through people by prophecy. The Holy Spirit has His own entity and His own character, and He works in people. Many times it is said that the Holy Spirit was given to people to enable them to fulfill different roles. In the Book of Exodus, for example, He is given for the construction of the Tabernacle of God.

In 1 Kings 22:20-21 there is a distinction between the character and entity of the Holy Spirit and those of evil spirits: "And the Lord said, 'Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?' So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, and said, 'I will persuade him.' The Lord said to him, 'In what way?' So he said, 'I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.' And the Lord said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so.'"

The Spirit of God is expressed through people. In 2 Samuel 23:2-3 we read: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: 'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.'" The Holy Spirit works in people.

When the children of Israel violated the Law of God, they essentially rebelled against the Holy Spirit, as it is written in Isaiah 63. We find in this chapter that the children of Israel grieved the "Spirit of

God” as a result of their sins.

The Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of God. He is eternal, and is mentioned in Genesis in the creation story. Job also describes Him as a creative force: “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life” (Job 33:4). In other words, the Spirit of God is the same entity as God. Of course there are those who will say that the Spirit of God is God, but the Word of God does not describe Him in this way. Ezekiel 36:26-27 says: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.” Here there are two entities – God and the Holy Spirit, just as the giver of the gift and the gift cannot be singular, they can, however, be one. Isaiah says a number of times that the three manners of God are found together. Chapter 48:16, for example, says: “Come near to Me, hear this: I have not spoken in secret from the beginning. From the time that it was, I was there. And now the Lord God and His Spirit have sent Me.” Isaiah 59:19-21: ““So shall they fear the name of the Lord from the west, and His glory from the rising of the sun; When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him. The Redeemer will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,’ says the Lord. ‘As for Me,’ says the Lord, ‘this is My covenant with them: My Spirit who is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your descendants, nor from the mouth of your

The Holy Spirit operates as a persona. In John it says that He dwells, testifies, reproves, guides, listens and speaks – all of these characteristics are the characteristics of the Holy Spirit that works in us.

descendants’ descendants,’ says the Lord, ‘from this time and forevermore.”

All of us are awaiting this revival expectantly, a revival that will awaken our people Israel. This revival is described by the prophet Zechariah when he says that God will pour out His Spirit on His people Israel, and they will look upon Him, the One whom they have pierced.

The Holy Spirit operates as a persona. In John it says that He dwells, testifies, reproves, guides, listens and speaks – all of these characteristics are the characteristics of the Holy Spirit that works in us.

In conclusion we will read from Romans 8:14-17: “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father’. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs - heirs of God and joint heirs with Messiah, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”

I hope that the question of the divinity of the Holy Spirit will not damage our witness, and that we will know that in the Holy Spirit we are children of God and heirs to the inheritance that we have in Him.

## The Relationship of the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father

### T.F.

I will try to explain the intention of the Scriptures when they speak of the relationship of the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father. First of all, I wish to emphasize that the divinity of Yeshua the Messiah is not subject to discussion and debate among believers. Throughout the entire history of the Congregation, the divinity of Yeshua the Messiah was an essential requirement for those who desired to be considered disciples of the Messiah. Whoever does not accept the divinity of Yeshua the Messiah isn't considered a disciple and believer, and is not received as part of the body of the Messiah.



We can learn about the relationship of the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father particularly from the Gospel of John. This Gospel refers to God the Father more than 100 times. The other Gospels refer to God the Father approximately 30 times. There are two words in the New Covenant that describe the "Father": the Aramaic word "Abba" (see Romans 8:15), that appears three times, and the Greek word "Pater" that appears close to 400 times, 250 times with a religious connotation. It is worthwhile to note that most of the times the word "father" is used in the Hebrew Scriptures, it is in a non-

religious sense.

In the Gospel of John there are three sections that help us to understand the special relationship between Yeshua the Messiah and God the Father. In chapter 5:16-30, Yeshua relates to God the Father as "My Father": "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (v. 17). In verse 18, the Jewish leaders understood that Yeshua attributed to Himself a status that in their opinion He did not deserve, when He called God His Father: "making Himself equal with God." Every time that the word "equal" appears in the New Covenant, the intention is full equality (see Matthew 20:12 and Revelation 21:16). In chapter 10:22-39 of the Gospel, the Jewish leaders wished to stone Yeshua because "being a man, He makes Himself God" saying, "I and My Father are one" (v 30). The same thought appears in John 17:11 in Yeshua's prayer, which says: "That they may be one as We are."

There is no doubt that the Jewish leaders, who knew the Hebrew Scriptures well, understood that Yeshua was saying that He is equal to God, and from their perspective, His words were considered blasphemy. If the Jews in the New Covenant period understood that Yeshua was declaring His equality with God, in other words, that He Himself is God, then why should we in the 21<sup>st</sup> century doubt the identity and divinity of the Messiah?

In order to understand the harsh response of the Jews in those days, we need to understand the scriptural background of the

word “father”. The word “father” appears in the Hebrew Scriptures about 1180 times in the secular sense (relating to the father of a family, the father of a people, an elderly man, etc.), and only about 15 times in the religious sense. For example, in Deuteronomy 32:6, Moses turns to the people and says: “Is He not your Father, who bought you? Has He not made you and established you?” In Jeremiah 3:4, God turns to the people and quotes their prayer: “Will you not from this time cry to Me, ‘My Father, You are the guide of my youth?’” And in Psalm 2:7, God refers to the king reigning in Zion: “You are my Son, today I have begotten You.” There are several other places in which the prophets of Israel relate to God as a Father, but there is not even one instance in which someone calls God “My Father.” Even today in Judaism, there isn’t anyone who calls God “My Father”, and in the prayers of Israel there is no use made of the expression “My Father” in reference to God, apart from a number of prayers in which the expression “Our Father” appears (the Afternoon Service prayer:

“Our Father Our King, pardon us and answer us, because we have no good works”, which evidently was written by Rabbi Akiva).

When Yeshua used the word “My Father” in reference to God, He did something that had never been done in the history of the Hebrew Scriptures! He declared Himself to be on the same level as God.

It is no wonder that the Jews tried to kill Yeshua for saying: “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working,” and “I and My Father are one.” When Yeshua used the word “My Father”

in reference to God, He did something that had never been done in the history of the Hebrew Scriptures! He declared Himself to be on the same level as God.

What can be understood regarding the relationship of the Father to the Son and the Son to the Father from these same portions from the Gospel of John? Chapter 5 describes a number of things in this regard:

1. V. 19: The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do. In addition, everything that the Father does, the Son also does in like manner. The acts of the Father and the Son are equivalent.
2. V. 20: The Father shows the Son all that He does. The Son knows what the Father knows.
3. V. 21: Just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son also gives life to whom He will. The Father and the Son give life.
4. V. 22: The Father has committed all judgment to the Son. The Son is given authority to judge.
5. V. 23: People should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor

the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him. The Son and the Father are equivalent in their honor.

Chapter 14 describes additional qualities of the Son. Philip approached Yeshua and said: “Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.” His request comes in response to things that Yeshua said, including that “In my Father’s house there are many mansions,” and that He is going there to “prepare a place for you,” and that they know the way. Philip evidently didn’t understand His words, and expected an additional vision or revelation regarding the way to the Father, but Yeshua replied: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (v. 9), “I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me,” and “The Father who dwells in Me does the works.” Yeshua says in the clearest manner possible and makes an unprecedented declaration that whoever sees Him is essentially seeing the Father!

Yeshua says in the clearest manner possible and makes an unprecedented declaration that whoever sees Him is essentially seeing the Father!

Are we in need of additional proofs in order to understand that the Father and the Son are one, and that Yeshua is God? In the beginning of the public ministry of our Lord, it was said: “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,” and in the end of His days, on the night before He was crucified, Yeshua called God:

“Abba, My Father.” 1 John 5:10 says: “He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself.”

Sometimes it is difficult for us to understand the structure of the Trinity. We have seen that the Father is equal to the Son and that the Son is equal to the Father. The Holy Spirit is also equal to the Son and to the Father. It is perhaps possible to understand the structure of the Trinity through an example from daily life. Ice, water and steam are made of the same material – two atoms of hydrogen and one of oxygen. But anyone who has seen ice, water and steam, wouldn’t know that they are made of the same material, because their forms are different. A simple chemical test will reveal that the three forms are indeed made of the same material.

Although the Jews did not understand most of the things that Yeshua said, in this instance they did understand very well, that despite His different appearance from the Father (just as ice looks different from water), Yeshua declared that He was equal to God. In Matthew 11:27 He said: “All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him,” and John 1:18 says of Yeshua: “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.”

## The “Holy Trinity” through the Looking-Glass of Judaism

Joseph Shulam

### Introduction

Among topics most thoroughly discussed in scholarly Christian circles, the “Holy Trinity” is one of the leaders of the pack. From the times of the councils appointed by Constantine, the first Christian Caesar, in the early fourth century in the city of Nicaea (Iznik, in modern Turkey), the debate over the legitimacy of this “Holy Trinity” hasn’t been silenced even for a moment as the doctrine has been defined, transfigured and transformed over and over again throughout the generations. Today we have also achieved a certain maturity that allows us to open the subject for discussion, even if the discussion is conducted among us with the same militancy that characterized the darker periods of the cellars of the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition. The truth is that we could say the *Shehechyanu* for the willingness to discuss the subject and give our brothers in the faith an opportunity to share from their hearts.

In order to discuss the topic, it is necessary to distinguish between three stages. The first stage is the findings provided by the Holy Scriptures. The second stage is the developments that occurred in the Christian world throughout the generations, and their connection to Jews and Judaism. The third stage is not connected at all to Christianity: it relates to the Jewish understanding of biblical texts that serve the Jewish world as well as Christianity, towards the justification of their positions.

The truth is that we could say the *Shehechyanu* for the willingness to discuss the subject and give our brothers in the faith an opportunity to share from their hearts.

It is worthwhile reviewing some of the basic rules in the field of the discussion and research of Scripture and of ancient religions such as Christianity and Judaism:

1. The source of authority must come from the Scriptures themselves. Whatever is said in Scripture outweighs any other consideration.
2. The Christian tradition and the Christian “Oral Law”, which developed in the Churches of Rome and later in the Protestant Churches, do not need to determine anything regarding the faith of Jewish disciples of Yeshua the

Messiah. In the same way, it is impossible to accept the authority of the Jewish Sages regarding Yeshua the Messiah, since the Sages are prejudiced against anything related to Christianity, and are unable to see the figure and character of Yeshua beyond the veil.

The doctrine of the Trinity is not expressly written in the New Covenant

3. The literal reading of the Scriptures determines issues of halacha (practice) and dogma. Allegorical interpretation is illegitimate for the purpose of determining dogma.
4. No one is authorized to force his personal views and opinions upon his brothers in the faith or upon the congregations. Everything that is clearly stated in Scripture according to the literal meaning should be accepted by us, but anything that is not expressly written but is a result of the calculations and conjectures of people, is not binding upon the entire body of the Messiah.

## Body of the Lecture

1. The principle woven throughout all the Scriptures, without exception, is the faith in one, single God. Any man that worships or serves more than one God is by definition a heathen and an idol worshipper.
  - A. The Scriptures recognize that God has a Son (see Psalm 2, Proverbs 30:4, 2 Samuel 7).
  - B. The Scriptures also recognize the existence of the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10-11, Psalm 51:11).
  - C. The Hebrew Scriptures clearly reveal that there is one God, who has many names: God,<sup>1</sup> Lord (the Tetragrammaton), Everlasting Father, God Almighty, El Shaddai, the Lord of Hosts, the Mighty One of Jacob, the Fear of Isaac, the Rock of Israel, and many others.
2. Despite the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures recognize the fact that God has a Son, and also a Spirit, this does not challenge the faith in one single God, just as Isaiah stated so clearly: “I am the Lord, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, though you have not known Me, that they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form

---

1) "אל" (El) and "אלוהים" (Elohim).

the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things” (Isaiah 45:5-7).

3. The Scriptures clearly write that God can descend to earth: “Then the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, on the top of the mountain. And the Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up” (Exodus 19:20). This is not the only place which clearly states that God descended to earth, and there is no doubt that God can appear as a man in every way, and can even walk among men.



- A. In Judaism it is no problem to call God “Father” or “my Father”: “For you are our Father, for Abraham did not know us and Israel did not recognize us. You are God our Father our Redeemer, Your name is from eternity.”
- B. Judaism also has no problem calling the Messiah “Y.H.W.H”: “Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: The Lord (Y.H.W.H) our Righteousness.”
- C. The Midrash says regarding these verses: “Rabbi Yonatan said, ‘There are three entities that will be called in the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, and they are- the saints, Messiah, and Jerusalem. The saints as it is said; Messiah as it is written and this is His name by which He shall be called “The Lord our Righteousness”; Jerusalem as it is written: “All the way around shall be eighteen thousand cubits; and the name of the city from that day shall be: The Lord is There”’. ‘A day will come’, said Rabbi Elazar, ‘and it shall be said before the saints “Holy,” in the way that it is said before the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is said, that it shall be that those who remain in Zion and those who are left in Jerusalem shall be called holy.’” (The Babylonian Talmud, Baba Bathra 75:2).
4. The Sages of Judaism have no problem calling the Messiah as Jeremiah the prophet called Him: “The Lord our Righteousness!” And also we should have no problem calling the Messiah “The Lord our Righteousness.”

5. The title “Son of God” is not unusual in the framework of the Law and the Prophets. The title “sons of God” in the plural, appears many times, already in the book of Genesis. The most important text in this regard is found in Isaiah 9:6: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” The commentary on this verse is highly varied, but there is no doubt that when the Sages apply this verse to King Hezekiah, they are trying to avoid the logical conclusion that this verse is speaking here about the “Messiah” and not about King Hezekiah, who became corrupt in his later days. The Sages tried to find a way out by applying the verse to King Hezekiah. How could the Sages attribute such titles to Hezekiah? Such a thing is difficult to accept. There is no doubt that the prophet knew from the mouth of the Almighty that a child would be born in Israel that could be called “Mighty God,” “Everlasting Father” and “Prince of Peace.”

### Premise No. 1

According to the Scriptures and the Sages, as Jews we have no problem preserving the unity of God and at the same time believing in a Messiah who is Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Lord our Righteousness, as well as other important titles attributed to Him. In the same way, we have no problem believing and teaching that the Messiah is in every sense flesh and blood, and in every sense God.

In light of the Scriptures and for the sake of the truth and our testimony to the people of Israel, we must examine the Holy Scriptures, and not accept the Christian traditions and the Christian articles of faith as binding upon the body of Messiah in the Land of Israel or in the world at large

One can bring proofs from Kabbalistic literature, such as the *Zohar*. They can be found in a booklet called “The Secret of the Three,” but there is no need to bring proofs from literature that we reject and whose value we negate for every other purpose. The Hebrew Bible and the New Covenant suffice for me, and I have no need for help from sources such as the Kabala in order to know that Yeshua is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God, an inseparable part of the Father; the Father and the Son, together with the Holy Spirit, are revealed to mankind as one single, unique God.

The question is this: Why do we insist on accepting explanations to dilemmas that arise from the connection between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, from a tradition which fundamentally rejects Israel, hates Jews, and does not take into account the principal foundations of the Law and the Prophets? Why, as Jews in the Land of Israel, after 2,000 years of dispersion, can we not determine our own fate on the basis of the Holy Scriptures alone?

Why, as Jews in the Land of Israel, after 2,000 years of dispersion, can we not determine our own fate on the basis of the Holy Scriptures alone?

## Premise No. 2

How is it possible to believe in one God, as the Scriptures teach, and nonetheless believe that Yeshua is God? Here are a number of guidelines that will help us understand Yeshua as God without offending that which is sacred to the people of Israel, as revealed to our forefathers in the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Covenant:

1. The apostle is equal to the one who sends him (with regards to an apostle who has received apostolic authority from the one who sent him, in order to execute a role on behalf of his sender).
  - a. Every apostle does the will of his sender and not his own.<sup>1</sup>
  - b. An apostle speaks in the first person while representing his sender. We see this with the prophets of Israel who speak in the first person, as though they themselves are God.<sup>2</sup>
2. That which is clearly stated in the Scriptures has greater value than that which is not expressly written. Conclusions that require cross-study of various Scriptures and the use of commentaries cannot be given greater weight

---

1) "I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another comes in his own name, him you will receive" (John 5:43). "Yeshua answered them and said, 'My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority'" (John 7:16-17). There are many other places which clearly teach that Yeshua was sent by the Father and received full authority to be 100% God in the flesh and dwell amongst us, clothed in slave's garments like us (See 2 Philipians 6-9).

2) "Therefore the Lord says, The Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, 'Ah, I will rid Myself of My adversaries, and take vengeance on My enemies. I will turn My hand against you, and thoroughly purge away your dross, and take away all your alloy'" (Isaiah 1:24-25). "Do not be afraid of their faces, for I am with you to deliver you,' says the Lord. Then the Lord put forth His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me: 'Behold, I have put My words in your mouth'" (Jeremiah 1:8-9).

than the literal interpretation of the Scripture itself.

3. The doctrine of the Trinity is not expressly written in the New Covenant. It is the result of discussions held for the first time in Nicaea in 325 CE, and again in the year 333 CE. Discussions and divisions continued regarding the new doctrine of the Trinity, some even leading to death sentences.
4. There are other traditions and doctrines that are not expressly written in the Scriptures, whose significance to the Christian tradition is great, although they are not at all mentioned in the Scriptures. The Christian holidays, for example, whose significance in the Christian tradition is very great, although there is no hint of them in the Scriptures.



### Premise No. 3

The following are clearly written in the New Covenant:

- a. “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; **one Lord**, one faith, one baptism; **one God and Father of all**, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4-5).
- b. “Yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and **one Lord, Messiah Yeshua**, through whom are all things, and through whom we live” (1 Corinthians 8:6).
- c. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2).

### Conclusion

In each of these texts, and in many others, the clearest element is the unity of the God of Israel. He is one just as stated in the reading of the “Shema.”

In light of the Scriptures and for the sake of the truth and our testimony to the people of Israel, we must examine the Holy Scriptures, and not accept the Christian traditions and the Christian articles of faith as binding upon the body of Messiah in the Land of Israel or in the world at large.

## Discussion

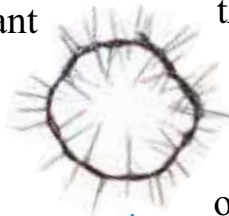
### Moderated by Gershon Nerel

#### Gershon Nerel

It is very important to keep your comments short and avoid long speeches. Please wait for me to grant you permission to speak.

#### Daniel Yahav, *Peniel Fellowship, Tiberias*

First of all, I am thankful for this Conference, the organization, the good spiritual food that we had here and the good food that we ate. I only want to say that overall one might say that there is unity among the speakers regarding the divinity of Yeshua. It is very important to note this since there have been some accusations that the body of Messiah is divided and disunited, and half do not accept the divinity of Yeshua. But this is not true. There is unity in the Land regarding the divinity of Yeshua. I want to add one Scripture that was not yet mentioned, from Romans chapter 10, where it clearly speaks of Yeshua. Verses 9-13: "That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Yeshua and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. [It is speaking here about our salvation, which is tied to Yeshua...] For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, 'Whoever believes on Him [Yeshua] will not be put to shame.' For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to



all who call upon Him. [Pay attention!!!] For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved'". It says here "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord", so Yeshua is God. Why is this verse so important? Who will be saved? The one who calls on the name of the Lord. If Yeshua is not God, then on whose name shall we call? On the name of an angel who is greater than angels, or beneath God, or what? If Yeshua is not God, then we have no salvation. It is important to define the boundaries and not compromise. Within this framework we may decide whether to use the concept of "Trinity" or other terms that were mentioned, but recognizing the substance of the matter is everyone's obligation.

#### Meno Kalischer, *Congregation Beit Geulah, Jerusalem*

One gets the impression that we need to be acceptable to everyone. To say, "This guy is good, and this one, too. They're all good". Yeshua didn't come for this. Yeshua didn't come to compromise and say to everyone, "You know what? Let's all be friends, there's no problem", but rather stood before His people and said to them: If you don't receive Me as I am, then your judgment is Gehinom (Hell). There is no middle ground! We are trying to be more merciful than Yeshua, too merciful. There are subjects in which one can say about an individual that they are a better student or a worse

student. Okay, fine, he's still a child of God. But here we are talking about shattering the base of the pyramid, period. Either you have God or you don't. On this we don't have to try to come to a compromise or develop the discussion, in order for another congregation to be called a congregation. Really, this is not the issue. Second point: In the reading of Joseph Shulam's lecture, I personally found a contradiction in his words, a lack of clarity. Until a little past halfway through, I said to myself, great, then boom! Suddenly Yeshua is not God. I personally found a contradiction, and I know that this isn't fair since he isn't here to defend himself. But I want to be honest, and to say that I found a contradiction.

### David Stern

(David holds up a small suitcase containing theological books.) I thought that this suitcase would be sufficient for all of these books... And I brought only those who deal with the divinity of Yeshua and the Holy Spirit. Louis Barkoff is a Calvinist and I have his book here, and many others... I can find many things that deal with this, but it's boring. Theology has been called the "Queen of the Sciences". Why? Why not physics or economics? Because it is so difficult to explain the words of God to people, and so that's why I believe that theology received this title. What is the role of theology? To



explain to people the words of God. If so, in order to explain to people, one must take into account the people and bring them to a place where they can understand the words of God. And that is the reason why books like this are written. It is not easy. Hundreds of works and books were written on the subject of the Trinity, so that everyone could explain their ideas. But the wonderful thing about the Holy Scriptures is that the simplest man can be saved, as well as the most intellectual who has read theology his entire life. He can also be saved, and the two are equal at the foot of the cross. All of this is a prologue to my suggestion that we allow our brothers some space to explain themselves. Not everyone is broadly knowledgeable, not everyone has studied. I studied at Fuller Theological Seminary; I have knowledge. But I still received a mediocre grade in theology, and I haven't received many mediocre grades in my life. I have written books, and perhaps they testify that I am mediocre. There are those among us whom I call "brothers", and I am exercising my right to name one of them, Uri Marcus, who presently claims that Yeshua is not God. I want to give him the space to express himself. I once wrote an article called: "There are non-saved Christian Jews", and presented it to the school where I studied. A very strange name... How do I know that there are people like this? My wife read it before we were married and asked me how I

know this. She argued, and rightfully so, that I had a hidden agenda to prove in this name my disdain for Christians that argue that they were saved twenty years ago and continue in sin, as opposed to a Chasidic Jew who tries to do good and isn't saved. This was a contradiction in my eyes, and on this basis I wrote. I intended to speak about this and used incorrect theological language, which was my mistake. I simply ask that we allow those who do not have theological knowledge to express themselves, to give them space, to pray for them, to receive them as brothers, and perhaps there isn't a need to be so harsh.

Baruch Maoz,  
*Grace and Truth Assembly,*  
*Rishon LeZion*

I am assuming that no one will suspect me of doubting Yeshua's divinity or of wishing to compromise on this point. At the same time, I want to express, together with my agreement with Meno, some agreement with what David Stern said. I must tell you that David Loden asked me during the meal if I am surprised. And I want to answer before all of you, because I am surprised! Surprised in a positive sense. I am surprised and pleased, and I thank God for the level of the discussion, for the level of the presentation of the issues. At the same time, there are some on the "other side" who don't need to be there. They are there because of the heavy-handedness,

hard-heartedness and harsh speech of some of us. It seems to me that we need to have the courage of our faith and the love to be ready to sit together with them, to listen to them and to explain to them. I would take advantage of the fact that I am known as one of those who do not compromise, and I am not calling here for compromise... I think that we have an obligation not only to the truth

We sometimes forget that words are the tools of theology, and what we did here today is theology. We are not always careful enough with words

of God, but also to all of the children of God, and we have pushed some of the children of God to the other side. This is the first thing that I wanted to say. The second thing is shorter: During the discussion we sometimes forget that words are the tools of theology, and what we did here today is theology. We are not always careful enough with words. It was said here today that Yeshua is part of the Father, and I know that the person who said that didn't mean it. It is forbidden to say this; it is not true. It was said that Yeshua is God on another level. I know that the speaker didn't mean to say this, but it is forbidden to say this. If we are talking theology, we need to be careful with our language, to think very carefully, because there will be those who grasp on to our words or will be led

astray or use them as an excuse. The last thing that I want to say is that just as it is forbidden for us to deny those of our brothers who are on the other side, it is also forbidden to give in to the tendency to speak disparagingly of those precious brothers who are not Jews. They experienced a terrible tragedy and were not born Jews, but they are our brothers in the Messiah; the body of Messiah is one. And every expression of disregard concerning what the Holy Spirit has done throughout history in the body of the Messiah has no place among us... Brothers and sisters, thank you.



Efrat Gerlich,  
*Congregation Sukkat David,*  
*Jerusalem*

Regarding the speaker that preceded me, Baruch Maoz, I want to say that I think that we haven't pushed anyone into a corner. I think that whoever calls himself a Messianic, and honestly reads the Holy Scriptures from the beginning until the end, or even suffices with the five Books of the Law (I am speaking here about Jews that deny the Trinity), should find it very difficult to deny the existence of the Trinity, since it appears in the first verses of the Book of Genesis. There it is written, "The Spirit of God hovered over the waters" – God is a plurality. Concerning the Angel of God that struggled with Jacob, it says

that Jacob asked a blessing from Him. So I think that a person that truly seeks God in earnest cannot arrive at any conclusion other than that the Trinity exists, no matter what we call it. There is a Father, there is a Son and there is the Holy Spirit. Yeshua said that He Himself doesn't know when He will return; only the Father knows. Therefore I conclude that there is a hierarchy. That doesn't mean that Yeshua is less God than the Father - just as in a family there is a father, a mother and a child but the woman isn't inferior to the husband, although he is the head of the family. It is possible to understand it in this way- at least it helps me. I wanted to share a verse from the Book of Proverbs, chapter 8, and I think that "Wisdom" described in this chapter is a very beautiful metaphor for Yeshua. Verse 22: "The Lord possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth". The first part of the verse bothered me a bit. How can one resolve this? Later it is written in verse 27, "When He prepared the heavens, I was there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep". In other words, even before the creation, Yeshua was, if this proverb indeed refers to Yeshua. If so, there is no contradiction.

T.F.,  
**Jaffa Assembly**

I wanted to relate to the “other camp, the other side”, of whom Baruch Maoz spoke. I see that there are two kinds of people on the other side, in the other camp. There are the teachers and those who learn from them. I am much more tolerant of those who hear something incorrect and do not possess the theological tools to discern it. By the way, I never went to theological seminary, and I am very proud of the fact. There are those who learn, and there is tolerance and compassion for them and we need to help them to understand that what they are hearing isn’t correct. Regarding the teacher, we must delegitimize him. This is understood by some of us, but not by all of those here. How should this be applied? Let’s take for example a person that comes into our congregations and requests permission to speak, and I know that he believes that Yeshua is not God. There is no way that I will allow him to speak! If he opens his mouth, I will stop him, or someone else in the congregation that does the same. He has no permission to speak. If someone comes along without the tools to judge, I will sit with him, I’ll speak with him and try to explain it to him. This is compassion, and of

I never went to theological seminary, and I am very proud of the fact

course we need to welcome him just as we welcome everyone else. There is no room for compromise. I see a sharp difference between a teacher that teaches and the one that listens but doesn’t understand. I think that our approach needs to vary according to these two groups, without compromising.

Arthur Goldberg,  
**Congregation Keren Yeshu’ah,  
 Tel Aviv**

It is interesting that I am speaking after you, because I also wanted to ask – what about our children that are learning these things from this kind of people? You also said that these people have no legitimacy. And why? Because we don’t understand what all of them are saying and teaching? They are saying that Yeshua did not preexist, that He is less than God and that He was created. If we understand the things that these teachers are teaching, we need to ask ourselves, will we clear the stage for these people and allow them to teach us? Are they brothers, as Meno said? Whoever teaches these things is not a brother. We also need to understand that if Yeshua is indeed not eternal, if He didn’t exist forever, then three quarters of the New Covenant is not truth. If so, we need to clear the stage for the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses, because they

are brothers and they are nice and they have something to say. We need to understand this logically.

Noam Hendren,  
*Congregation Keren Yeshu'ah,*  
Tel Aviv

I want to support what Baruch shared. When we deal with theology we are indeed dealing with words, and therefore we must be precise. When we speak about God and God appearing in all kinds of contexts, we don't always discern exactly what is being said. But this isn't really what I wanted to focus on. T.F. spoke about the relationship between the Father and the Son and related primarily to the Gospel of John, and I think that that is appropriate, since this is one of the dominant subjects in the Gospel of John. John, in his Gospel, gives about seven signs/miracles that prove who Yeshua is, after presenting Yeshua at the beginning of his book as the Word of God, who is God. The last great miracle is the resurrection of Yeshua Himself. What is the response that Yeshua expected from those who witnessed these signs? And what did John expect when he told about these signs? Focusing in chapter 20 on the case of Thomas, there is an issue of understanding the words,



particularly the expression “The Son of God” in verse 31. Yeshua revealed Himself to Thomas and said: Touch me freely; I am here. “Thomas said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” And Yeshua didn't say: “Be silent! Don't exaggerate!

Okay, you are surprised... but it is not at all like that.” On the contrary, Yeshua said to him, “Because you have seen Me, you have believed.” “Believe” is the key word in the Gospel of John. John's Gospel is the Gospel of faith: “Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those

who have not seen and yet have believed”. Believed what? Believed in who Yeshua is, that He is my Lord and my God! But this is not all. This is the end of the story, the response to the last sign of Yeshua - His resurrection. Now John, the editor, comes and gives his interpretation. He explains why he recorded all of these things, including the final story, and the words of Thomas. There isn't even one verse that comes in between. Thomas spoke and Yeshua half praised him, half didn't. And then in verse 30-31 John writes: “Yeshua did many other miraculous signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Yeshua is the Messiah, the

Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name". What does it mean, "The Son of God"? Thomas said earlier, "My Lord and my God", and Yeshua said, "Blessed are you that you have believed" and even more blessed are those who believed without seeing. And then John said, why did I tell all of this? In order that you will believe that He is the Messiah, the Son of God. What does this mean? A Son of God, who is God, who is partner to all of the characteristics of God. As Baruch said, all of the characteristics that define God are suitable for Yeshua as well. He is God in the full sense of the word. Therefore when John in his second epistle wants to talk about how we should relate to the subject of the teaching of the Messiah, he speaks in very clear terms concerning faith in the Son of God, as we saw in chapter 20 here. The Son of God is God! Just as our brother Daniel read to us from the Epistle to the Romans, "those who call on the name of the Lord" believe that Yeshua is God. This is the same word in Greek, kurios. There is no distinction there between the quote from the Hebrew Scriptures and the one who confesses with his mouth that Yeshua is Lord. It is the same word. In the second Epistle of John, verse 9, John shows us how to relate to the importance of the faith in Yeshua as the Son of God, according to the meaning that he already determined



in his Gospel: "Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Messiah does not have God. Whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son." The expression "the teaching of the Messiah" refers to Him as the Son, the Son of God. He Continues: "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work." This is a very serious issue, and it is not my decision. It is stated in the Word of God. There are things that one certainly does not compromise on, and this is not a lack of love, but rather this is true love, because congregational discipline is meant to cause the sinner to repent. If someone commits adultery and we say to him, "Okay, continue to commit adultery, but just don't preach it and don't teach others that it's permissible". Will this make adultery permissible?! But we don't say this, rather we say, "Repair your ways or leave the fellowship of the congregation". Thus we prevent the evil from spreading, and also draw the brother back.

If he is truly a brother, he will want to be part of the family of God. And thus we honor God and the truth that He revealed concerning moral sin and the truth of God that Messiah Yeshua is the Son of God in the full sense of the word.

Victor,  
*Congregation Tikvat Yisrael,*  
Holon

Brothers and sisters, I am actually part Greek. I am happy to be here in a gathering in which most of the brothers are Jews in the flesh. In other words, this is a sign that God has already revealed His salvation to the Jews. When people told me the good news of the salvation of Yeshua, I suddenly understood that the Bible is the book of the Jews and that you are a chosen people and that God used you in order to preach the gospel to all the nations, “A light to the nations”. “The nations” - that includes me (Victor); it includes Roni, my brother from Bulgaria and it includes my brother from Australia... The entire world is looking to Israel. If in Israel, brothers and sisters, we allow a little poison to enter, we will open the door to the doctrines of men; this poison will later on spread to the whole world. I am sorry to say it, but everyone is looking to you, to Israel. I don't watch television, but people have told me that in the news you see Israel morning and evening, all the time - Israel. Halleluyah! Because if we preach the gospel, the world will receive it. I preach the gospel since this is our power – I tell people that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This truth, this faith is yours; I am here by grace. Brothers, please - Father, Son and Holy Spirit!

Avi,  
*Congregation Keren Yeshu'ah,*  
Tel Aviv

I have been on both sides of the curtain. Once I was in another congregation, and I want to tell you something, but first I will read a verse from James 5:19-20: “My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins”. When we were in the former congregation, we didn't have outside communication the way we have today. What we did hear was, for example, a tape of David Loden that was forbidden to play among us. We also heard teachings from several brothers in Ramat Gan, and so we opened up to the outside and understood what our teachers hid from us – that Yeshua is God. We understood this because it is written. You need to know that there are people in congregations that are in need of our help. It is forbidden for us to close the door in their faces. There are teachers that mislead and there are disciples that we need to help. That is it!



## Hanan Lukatz

I am debating. I wanted to be neutral and nice to everyone. I agree with what the brother before me said, that we need to search and save the brothers that are in a closed congregation. But there is a difference between those who hear and those who teach. The point that our brother David Stern made bothers me a lot. He said that we need to allow Uri Marcus space to express himself. I think that this is a forbidden thing to do. Uri Marcus has a course on the Internet that teaches why Yeshua is not God. In addition, he distributes a book that he translated to Hebrew, by Anthony Buzzard, that attempts to “restore the Messianic Faith”. I read this book and felt awful. Buzzard uses the same verses that the brothers here shared in order to prove the divinity of Yeshua, but he offers reasons and excuses in order to convince us that these verses say the exact opposite... And this book Uri Marcus is distributing and teaching in the Land. How much space are we going to give him? Should we give him any space at all? The first Epistle of John, in chapter 4:1-3, shows us clearly before whom we stand: “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Yeshua the Messiah has come in the flesh (in other words, that He is God that Clothed

I am not a theologian, I didn't study theology, and everything that I know is only from the Scriptures

Himself in flesh) is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Yeshua is not from God. This is the spirit of the anti-Messiah, which you

have heard is coming and even now is already in the world”. These are very clear words that cannot be manipulated.

## Menachem Benhayim, Messianic Assembly, Jerusalem

There is an exegesis of the verse “from all of my teachers I have grown wiser” from Pirkei Avot. Ben Zoma said that we can learn from every person, whether we agree with him or not, even from a negative thing, in order to not be like him. Today I heard many things, and regarding most of them I can say, Amen. But something is bothering me. I am not a theologian, I didn't study theology, and everything that I know is only from the Scriptures. I was a young man in the army, and it is this principle of liberality that I understood when I began to draw near to the Messiah through a novel by an Irish author, who made trouble for himself because he wrote about Yeshua and Miriam and Paul in a complimentary and Jewish way. The author didn't convert, didn't become Messianic. He described a figure that very much encouraged me to read the New Covenant. Then I became more liberal, more open. Because of this I could read the New Covenant, even though the teaching that I received forbade it.

When I grew up, I became a modern Zionist (like the Mafdal, the National Religious Party, even though there was no party like that then). What drew me to Yeshua was His personality. I am a child of God according to the Scriptures, but I am far from God. People speak with such dogmatism, as though all of the divine secrets are revealed to them and they can reveal them to others. I am no such hero; I don't want to reprove anyone here. To each his own way. My way developed stage by stage, until I began to attend congregations. The Quakers actually attracted me quite a bit. There is a lot of silence with them, not a lot of speech, but lots of works. And that is what is lacking among us. We are so involved in things above our heads and can summarize four laws of salvation, but this doesn't seem to me to be authentic, because Yeshua as a man demonstrated the way in which Messianics need to live. When I was young I was very influenced by the life of Yeshua as it appears in the New Covenant. He said to the disciples: Sell everything, distribute it to the poor and follow Me. That attracted me; I did that. Then I wasn't married; twice I did this out of a crisis, when I understood that I needed to follow Yeshua. Every time that I was among believers – they were usually not Jews – what I heard was: Bow your head, say “I accept Yeshua as my Savior”, and you are in heaven. You have an unlimited entrance pass to heaven. And I was a person who really wanted to live, because I had crises in

my life. My parents weren't Americans; they were from Galicia. They tried to be Ultra-Orthodox in America, and that didn't work well. Nonetheless, I want to emphasize that we are dealing too much with theology and too little with deeds. James said that faith without deeds is dead; sometimes I see only faith, if it is indeed faith, and few are willing to follow Yeshua as He lived. He didn't take disciples from the elite of the Land of Israel in those days. I think that we need to strive towards living according to Yeshua's example, not just according to theology, because we know very little about God. It isn't easy to know about Him; we don't live divine lives. But the humanity – we are after all humans, and therefore we need to develop the way of Yeshua through our humanity. That's it.

Marcos Brodsky,  
*Congregation Keren Yeshu'ah,*  
Tel Aviv

My teachers and gentlemen, I am a simple lamb... But from this entire conference two things stood out clearly to me from the Word of God. In 1 John 3:18 it is written: “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth”; and the second thing that clearly stood out to me was in verse 20 from the end of the Epistle of James, that was already quoted: “Remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins”. So to work! Thank you.

## David Stern

Only to say that Hanan is right, that I didn't distinguish between teacher and disciple. Uri Marcus is a friend, like many of you, and so I give him space as a friend. But as a teacher, that is another thing. I didn't think of that, but Hanan thought of it and I agree with him.

## Hanan Lukatz

Just another word in light of the last verse that was mentioned from the Epistle of James. I will be the first to rejoice when someone turns Uri Marcus, a sinner in this instance, from the error of his way. I am not against Uri Marcus, but against what he does.

## Yaakov Damkani,

### *Congregation Tiferet Yeshua*

As was already said here, words have great power. What words can do... A person can take one word and make from it a big to-do. Meno said what he said concerning Yosi's letter [the presentation of Joseph Shulam's teaching]. I think that a few words such as these can fill peoples' hearts with thoughts concerning the man Yosi Shulam. And I think that it was not in order. Perhaps it was worthwhile to reread the letter and try to understand Yosi's position. This is regarding

God forbid that we worship our doctrine and forget what God wants to do among His people

Yosi Shulam. There were some words aired, and I am not here representing YEHI,<sup>1</sup> but there were comments and words shared as though there is a division over the divinity of Yeshua. And I want to tell you that there is no such thing, so people should calm down! Let no one think that there is a division over the divinity of Yeshua. Someone stood and said that people can abuse the grace of God. To think that they know everything, and to use this grace in order to sin, since they know that His blood was poured out. They know how to say the right things, and express theological issues in the clearest, most wonderful, most correct manner – but only God knows how they manage their personal lives. It was said here that people want to see deeds being done with greater fervor for the glory of God. Theology is a most wonderful, great, important thing. Doctrine is a very important thing, but I emphasize again, God forbid that we worship our doctrine and forget what God wants to do among His people. God forbid that we do not understand that there is much more to life than the correct word, the correct terminology, which points to exactly how you think things should be said. A person can think a little differently and bring glory to God more than you who think that you know, and in the end it will become apparent that you know nothing. Really brothers, I am not speaking in the name of YEHI but for all of us. And there shouldn't

1) An abbreviation for a group called Yehudim Hasidei Yeshua (Jewish Followers of Yeshua).

be statements made here against this group, because the intention is truly good – only to benefit, to edify and to continue to give our Lord a name in Israel. Be strong and courageous!

Moshe Shoaie,  
*Congregation Tiferet Yeshua*

I want to say that if you thought that the verses that Hanan used were too harsh, then what do you say about what is written in 2 Peter 2:1-3: “But there are also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping”. Here we are told to fight on behalf of our faith. Pure and simple.

Baruch Maoz,  
*Grace and Truth Assembly,*  
*Rishon LeZion*

Brothers, most of you know me. Those of you that do not know me, you have benefited... We are not speaking here of fighting on behalf of our faith, but rather about something much more important. And it seems in the end that all of us are saying the same thing in different terms. I

But there are also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute

want very briefly, since we are taking away from the time of the general assembly, to try and summarize: 1. Yeshua is God, equal to the Father, equal to the Spirit. There is one God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is worth a division. Yaakov is a bit naïve. Over this we are divided. There is a group that denies this. And we will not compromise with them; they are not our brothers. This is our first starting point. But we are permitted to listen. Whoever comes and says, “This is how I was taught, so I believe in this way, but I am willing to listen to other views”, as T. said, I am willing to speak with him and receive him into the congregation. But I do not agree with him. The moment that the man gets up and says, “This is the truth”, I say to him, “Be silent!” If he is not silent, I say, “Go!” At the same time, I think that there is room to consider the possibility that a particular group that is prepared to do so, may meet with a group from the other camp – and they are clearly in the other camp – in order to have the opportunity to be heard. This is not for those teachers, because those

teachers most likely will not change their opinion (unless God does what He is able to do), teachers such as Uri Marcus and others. But for the sake of those who are their disciples, let them know that we are willing to hear them out, if not as brothers, then as potential brothers. Thank you.

Victor Smadja,  
**Messianic Assembly, Jerusalem**

If you have noticed, people are speaking much about the divinity of Yeshua, but those who have strayed quietly declare that their problem is actually the divinity of the Holy Spirit. They don't have a problem with Yeshua, but with the divinity of the Holy Spirit. I want to make you all aware of this point. To my dismay, we have experienced this problem in our congregation, and we immediately asked this particular man not to speak anymore in our congregation. To my dismay, his response was far harsher, and in the presence of others he called me names such as "Inquisitor", and similar terms. I think that this is a serious problem in the congregations. We must remember that it is not always solely about the divinity of Yeshua, but also the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

John Rocha,  
**Congregation Tzur Yeshuati,  
Nazareth Illit**

I agree that it is important to us as Messianic Jews not to receive someone that teaches that Yeshua is not God. Nonetheless we must pay attention to what was said

in the New Covenant on the Feast of Shavuot (Pentecost), when the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples. Peter spoke to the people in Jerusalem and on that day 3000 people came to faith. They didn't know how Yeshua was born, they only knew that Yeshua is the Messiah who died on the cross, that God raised Him from the dead and that if they believe in Him they will receive eternal life. A multitude of people came to faith. When Philip spoke with the Ethiopian that wanted to be

We must remember that it is not always solely about the divinity of Yeshua, but also the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

immersed, he said to him, "If you believe with all of your heart, it is permissible". The Ethiopian answered: "I believe that Yeshua the Messiah is the Son of God", and as a result was permitted to be immersed. In John's Epistle, he writes about a person that believes that Yeshua is the Son of God, that the Holy Spirit dwells in him. Such a man has been born again and has eternal life. If there are people that come to faith in the Messiah Yeshua, believe that He died as an atonement and rose from the dead, and that He sits now at the right hand of God – it is written in John that we need to receive them as brothers that were born again. We can't allow such a person to teach in the congregation if he can't say that Yeshua is also God, but we must accept him as a brother if he has the fruit of the Holy

Spirit in his life.

Yuri,  
**Jerusalem**

I wanted to say something that I thought Yaakov would state clearly. There have been aggressive calls here to excommunicate people, in other words, religious expulsion - to excommunicate and expel people that think differently from our congregation. There is a division. Whoever tries to say that there isn't really a division is wrong. Even among those sitting here the opinions are not identical. Baruch said, and I don't agree with him, that really there was a lack of clarity in terminology, but that everyone tried to say the same thing. This is not true. A person that spoke about three terms in certain verses meant that the first refers to men and angels, the second to the Messiah, and the third to God. This same man made a clear and hierarchical distinction, while another speaker said that there should be no separation or distinction made between various gradations, otherwise we err from the orthodox perspective. There are people here that think differently and it is not only an issue of terminology. Rather than speaking about the divinity of Yeshua, I want to speak about the aggression of excommunication and how to deal with this problem. Whoever knows history knows that from the first generation that lived here and until this day, things haven't changed a bit in terms of differing views. What concerns me today is the treatment

of the body of Messiah. There is a reason why I used the word "excommunication". Almost all of us identify ourselves as Jews, and every time that we go out on the street, we hear that we don't belong to this nation. We, as believers, are apostates. I hope that each one of you will fight until the bitter end to prove that you are a Jew. I hope, otherwise I wouldn't be here. My Jewish identity is very important. What right does a man have to excommunicate another that doesn't think like him? If so, by the same token we can receive the opinion of the majority of the nation that doesn't accept us as Jews. But this is not so, it is not true. In academic language this would be called incorrect methodology, and in commoners' speech we would say "What you despise do not do to your friend". Thank you very much.

Michael,  
**Congregation Tikvat Yisrael,  
Holon**

I am a Jew, but it is much more important that I am a Messianic. I wanted to say that I have dealt a lot with the Jehovah's Witnesses. I have spoken with many from the cult, and didn't succeed in convincing one of them to accept the Messianic faith. However, they managed to recruit some individuals from our congregations into their cult. Why am I saying this? Because we are sinful people and the heart of sinners is drawn to lies; we cling to them. In the Scriptures it says to beware, beware, beware. T. spoke about

a line of demarcation, and I think that we need to mark the line – because there are important doctrines, and whoever violates them is not considered a brother. We need to be very strong in this regard, and say to people that they are not our brothers until they cross over the line to our side, and there is no other way. Otherwise we have a problem, because most of our people will join them. What did Spurgeon say to the liberals? “If you do not repent, I will not negotiate with you at all.” We need to take the same stand.

Shmuel Birenbaum,  
*Yam Ahavato Congregation,*  
Bat Yam

Something very simple: 30 years ago I received Yeshua. Before that I thought that He was a hero and leader, and I was saved after He showed me that He is Lord and God. No one spoke with me, I studied. I have a degree in theology and I studied, and I am familiar with your books, David. But I believe and I stand here because He loves me. I am sorry to have brought new believers with me to hear everything that was said here and all of the problems, but we are here because He lives.

T.F.,  
Jaffa Assembly

I didn't mean to be the last. I want to read a verse from the Gospel of Mark: “When Yeshua entered into the temple area

He began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves”. I have a feeling that there are people here that think that we don't love others with a Messianic love if we don't accept everyone. No. Who can say that Yeshua did not love and that He wasn't full of grace? But when He saw something that wasn't right, He entered in with full authority and power and overturned tables and said: “My Father's house is a house of prayer”. It is not a loveless act for me to say to someone, “I cannot accept your opinion because you are mistaken”. On the contrary, this is true love. I think that someone already said this. I am in favor of deeds. I agree with Menachem who said that we should prove our faith through our deeds. This seminar is on the topic of the Trinity. The purpose, in other words, is to express an opinion, and not to be afraid to do so. And we will not listen to those who say that if you express a harsh opinion then you are acting without grace. On the contrary, whoever expresses an opinion and tries to return someone to the truth, he is the one who loves.



## Gershon Nerel

**W**e need to conclude this seminar. We did not come here to formulate a creed, or to acquire peoples' signatures. We did not come to apologize for our faith, and we are also not naïve. Thank God that we have the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Covenant. We have a foundation and we know that the Scriptures, and the truth in them, stretch from Genesis to the Revelation of John. Our work is to study and investigate from Genesis through to Revelation, and to focus on our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi and our God, Yeshua the Messiah. Let us remember that according to the Scriptures there are those who love truth and those who love lies. May God have mercy on us and help us to follow Him until the end.



Yad Hashmona, where the seminars took place





## *O*UR PURPOSES

- ❖ *To* serve the Messianic congregations and believers in Yeshua in the Land of Israel
- ❖ *To* give an expression for our Jewish and Israeli Identity as believers in the Messiah Yeshua, Son of God
- ❖ *To* strengthen the unity among the Messianic believers in the Land
- ❖ *To* be living witnesses for the truth of the Bible, Tanach (the Old Testament) and the New Testament
- ❖ *To* build and maintain relations with Messianic believers all over the world

© All rights are reserved by the authors.  
No article or portion thereof may be reproduced without permission in writing from The Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel

Editors: Gershon Nerel and Hanan Lukatz

## **The Messianic Jewish Alliance of Israel**

P.O. Box 40192, Mevasseret Zion 90805 Tel.: 972-2-579-1087 Fax: 972-2-534-9052  
Email: [mjai@netvision.net.il](mailto:mjai@netvision.net.il) Internet site: [www.mjai.co.il](http://www.mjai.co.il)

ISSN: 1565-8821